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# Editorial

For an increasing number of Christians the message of the Bible is no longer self-evident. The cultural gap between the ancient world and our secular technological world continues to grow. From the standpoint of a Christian caught in poverty, social injustice and political oppression, commentaries on the Bible written by scholars living in an academic atmosphere of middle and upper class society often seem flat and barely relevant. They fail to deal with what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the central problem of hermeneutics, the problem of application.

While we have good reasons to seriously question the new hermeneutic of Bultmann and his successors in their use of the dialectical method and the existentialism that rejects the concept of propositional revelation, the new hermeneutic does seek to uncover the hidden and unexamined presuppositions with which all of us come to the Scriptures. Reflection on our pre-understandings can be a purifying and creative activity for those within the circle of faith of the believing community and in a humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

This number of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* calls our attention to several issues for which sound hermeneutical methods are needed: the authority of the Bible in the midst of the contemporary ecumenical debate, the exegesis of key passages of Scripture using the hermeneutical principle of distancing and fusing of our horizons and the analysis of the spiritual resources of African and Asian churches living under social and political pressure. The awareness of the culture gap and the conditioning influences on our pre-understanding of the Gospel is reflected in the articles that deal with poverty, the relationship of evangelism to the needs of the total human community and in our understanding of the task of training Christians.

Comments of readers from the first two issues of ERT have been very encouraging. We trust you find this third issue equally challenging. But we need your help in suggesting articles and reviews, especially those originating from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Bruce J. Nicholls  
*General Editor*

## The Bible in the World Council of Churches

*by* PAUL G. SCHROTENBOER

FEW TOPICS have greater importance for the World Council of Churches than the use of the Bible in its deliberations and pronouncements. And few topics have generated more discussion during the thirty years of the Council's history. Both from within the Council and from without there has been criticism and praise of its views on and its use, misuse, or lack of use of the Bible.

Several papers have been written of recent time on how the World Council of Churches uses and views the Bible, both from ecumenical insiders, such as James Barr,<sup>1</sup> Hans Ruedi Weber,<sup>2</sup> and Ellen Flesseman van Leer,<sup>3</sup> as well as from evangelicals critical of the Council, such as Roger Beckwith<sup>4</sup> and Michael Sadgrove.<sup>5</sup> Little, to our knowledge, has been written on this subject in North America, and nothing, as yet, after the Fifth Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi. It is hoped that this paper will attract wider attention to what is a crucial issue, not just for the WCC, the most comprehensive ecumenical organization in the world of churches today, but for all other ecumenical organizations as well.

We may expect that in the next years the WCC will continue its study of the Bible in its own programs and in its churches, p. 163 especially in its portfolio on Biblical Studies. Until now this study has been done with little or no input from evangelicals, except those who are members of churches which belong to the Council. Only recently<sup>6</sup> has there been any conversation between the WCC and evangelicals on the use of the Bible.

It would be presumptuous to think that this paper will make a great contribution to a dialogue between evangelical associations of Christians and the WCC. Nevertheless there is real need for such dialogue and we do cherish the more modest hope that in giving attention now to this subject we will spur evangelicals to speak out in the ecumenical forum.

## I. THE MARCHING ORDERS

The Bible has had a significant place in the World Council of Churches since it was established in 1948. Although the words, 'according to the Scriptures' were not added to the Basis until 1961, the intention of the founding churches was not to neglect the Bible, but to find in it the foundation for the ecumenical movement. The original basis of the WCC was, largely for convenience sake and to avoid controversy, simply taken over verbatim from the Faith and Order movement which joined with the Life and Works movement to form the WCC. It was thought best in those early days of uncertainty, as David P. Gaines expressed it, to 'leave well enough alone', and not propose a new untried basis.<sup>7</sup>

It was at New Delhi (1961) that the then General Secretary, Dr. William Visser 't Hooft, made the claim that the Bible is the voice that gives the WCC its marching orders. In accordance therewith, the New Delhi documents speak repeatedly of the 'Biblical understanding' of such subjects as reconciliation and service. As Dr. Flesseman van Leer has stated, 'People spoke without hesitation about *the* Biblical message and *the* concept

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Authority of the Bible—A Study Outline', *The Ecumenical Review*, 21 (1969), pp. 135–49.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Bible in Today's Ecumenical Movement', *The Ecumenical Review*, 23 (1971), pp. 335–46.

<sup>3</sup> 'Biblical Interpretation in the World Council of Churches', *Study Encounter*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (1972).

<sup>4</sup> 'The Use of the Bible in the World Council of Churches', *The Churchman: A Quarterly Journal of Anglican Theology*, 89 (1975), pp. 213–24.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Bible from New Delhi to Nairobi'. Mimeograph.

<sup>6</sup> In 1971 a consultation between the World Council of Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in the Hague, the Netherlands, touched on the issue of the Bible. In September, 1976, there was a three-day meeting in Montreux, Switzerland, arranged by the World Council and endorsed by the World Evangelical Fellowship on the use of the Bible in *Salvation Today*. The author attended both events.

<sup>7</sup> *The World Council of Churches* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co., 1964), p. 882.

p. 164 of the Bible'.<sup>8</sup> It was at New Delhi that the Basis was expanded to include the trinitarian reference and the words 'according to the Scriptures'.

In Louvain, a mere ten years later, the Faith and Order report on 'The Authority of the Bible' flatly stated 'we are not to regard the Bible primarily as a standard to which we must conform in all the questions arising in our life'.<sup>9</sup> While this does not indicate an about face altogether, obviously deep changes occurred in ten years' time. It will be necessary to trace the course of events that brought about this basic change.

How the WCC in its early years looked at the Bible may be construed from a statement by Dr. John A. Mackay at the Second Assembly at Evanston, 1954, namely, that the theology of the report on the theme, 'Christ the Hope of the World', should be 'Biblically founded' and 'ecumenically unifying'.<sup>10</sup> This was undoubtedly the hope of many leaders of the ecumenical movement in that era. However, the question soon loomed large whether these two criteria could be met, and, if they should prove to be in conflict, which one would give way to the other.

After the Evanston Assembly a survey was taken which showed that 'the divided church heard only dimly the Word of God through the Bible'.<sup>11</sup> The Bible conveyed to equally devout and conscientious students different meanings. There were literalists, neo-orthodox, and theological liberals. Later (in 1961) the Orthodox churches with their inflexible views on the teaching of the early Church joined the Council.<sup>12</sup> Thus both among the common members as well as among theologians and churches there appeared deep-going divergences on the meaning of the Bible. Rather than bringing people and churches together, the Bible seemed to be driving a wedge between them. p. 165

The result was an increasing uncertainty as to the authority and meaning of the Bible, especially when the churches attempted to apply the Bible to the problems of modern life. Here, especially in the application of Biblical ideas, a modern life crisis developed. The crisis was best expressed in the Louvain report:

The automatic acceptance of the Bible as basis and standard has in many places been severely shaken of late. Many Christians find the Bible alien to them and to their daily life; they find it increasingly difficult to hear God addressing them directly in the words of the Bible. This difficulty is even felt by many churches. It is only with considerable difficulty that they are able to find in the Bible and its authority a clear basis for their witness and action in the contemporary world. But even in the ecumenical movement a certain perplexity has arisen over the Bible. It turns out that the Bible is read in different ways in the different churches. The Bible is used to justify divergent positions and thus even an appeal to Scripture can itself lead to fresh differences. Above all, difficulties have cropped up as churches have tried to speak and act together on the basis of the Bible. Occasional attempts to call the Christian answer to a specific problem more or less directly from the Bible have proved unsatisfactory. As a result the tendency has been more and more to

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<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971* (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1971), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Gaines, *op. cit.*, p. 594.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 837.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that the influence of Orthodox theology upon the ecumenical debate began only in 1961. From the very beginning Orthodox theologians were vocal in Faith and Order discussions and during the 40s and 50s they contributed to studies on the Bible. Two Orthodox theologians contributed papers to the volume *Biblical Authority for Today*, Alan Richardson and W. Schweitzer, eds. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951).

abandon the appeal to Biblical grounds altogether. Thus the problem simply is avoided, which is not a satisfactory course either.<sup>13</sup>

The Louvain Report further localized the causes for this unsatisfactory state of affairs in three areas: (1) the confessional differences among the churches, especially concerning the role of tradition of the church, (2) the influence of historical criticism, and (3) the historical remoteness of the Biblical witness.<sup>14</sup>

We should add to this list of causes the crisis that arose within the 'Biblical Theology' which played such a strong role in the formation of the WCC. Actually this was perhaps the most unsettling factor of all. It is to this that we would turn as we trace the development from the early view that in the Bible we find our marching orders (New Delhi) via the crisis in the churches to the p. 166 present situation, where, as Gaines expresses it, 'The honest person who was competent in the Scripture knew he could not say responsibly that the Bible taught this or that solution to any complex modern problem.'<sup>15</sup>

## II. THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY APPROACH

When one thinks of the so-called Biblical Theology in the ecumenical movement, he thinks of such men as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Hendrik Kraemes and W. A. Visser 't Hooft. All of them made an impact on the WCC, especially during the first decades. As Hans Ruedi Weber puts it, 'the Biblical theology movement is marked by the combination of a critical approach on the Bible and its witness to the history of salvation.'<sup>16</sup> The ecumenical document which best expresses the movement is the Wadham College statement on 'Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible'.<sup>17</sup> It was assumed by proponents of Biblical Theology that one could both hold the critical approach and retain the Bible's unity. Great stress was also placed on the salvation history in the 'mighty acts of God' performed in Israel, of which Jesus Christ forms the center and fulfillment.<sup>18</sup> The Bible was seen as a faithful and uncorrupted testimony to this salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*).

Biblical Theology was very Christo-centric and harmonizing. The Old Testament, it held, should be read in the perspective of the New Testament. Further, the proponents of Biblical Theology held that the Bible addresses men of all ages as contemporaries.

In the New Delhi Report one can find clear evidence of the influence of this Biblical Theology. Thus in the report on witness we read,

God is his own witness, that is to say, God has been and is at work authenticating his own message to men. When we speak of witness we mean testimony to the whole activity of God in the creation and preservation of the world, but especially in his mighty acts in

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<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-1.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 876.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>17</sup> *The Ecumenical Review*, 2 (1949-1950), pp. 81-6.

<sup>18</sup> Flesseman van Leer, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Israel's history and in the redemption of the p. 167 world by Jesus Christ. To this testimony the Holy Spirit in the church bears witness.<sup>19</sup>

The same report states: 'In the apostolic witness, coming to us in Scripture in the Spirit-filled church, God gives us the foundation of all subsequent witness.'<sup>20</sup>

A clear statement of the unifying and normative force of the Bible for the ecumenical movement was given by Edmund Schlink: 'Unless the norm of the Word of God, standing above all our seeking and self-questioning, is taken seriously, our quest for the church in other confessions, and the self-questioning in our own, must end in the dissolution of the church and in disobedience to the Lord of the Church.'<sup>21</sup>

Entirely in line with this, Visser 't Hooft could say: 'our studies begin with the Bible—that is, with hearing the Word of God; they move to evangelism—that is, to proclaiming the Word of God; they pass beyond to Christian action—that is, to doing the Word of God.'<sup>22</sup>

The study on 'The Bible and the Church's Message to the World Today', claimed that the inquiry had as its chief object to 'provide a solid Biblical grounding' for two other studies, one on evangelism and the other on Christian action. This was the consistent pattern up to and through New Delhi in 1961. The view is well expressed in the New Delhi report on Unity: 'The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament witness to the apostolic faith. This is nothing else than those events which constitute God's call of a people to be His people. The heart of the Gospel (*kerygma*) is Jesus Christ himself, his life and teaching, his death, resurrection, coming (*parousia*) and the justification and sanctification which He brings and offers to all men.'<sup>23</sup>

### III. MONTREAL, A WATERSHED

When the Faith and Order Commission met in Montreal in 1966 there was a change. It appeared not so much in the reports P. 168 adopted by the Commission as in the address of Dr. Ernst Käsemann. It was more an undercurrent than a surface phenomenon. While its effect was not apparent immediately, in the next decade its results would be unavoidable.

Käsemann claimed in his address that 'no romantic postulate, dressed up as a salvation history, can relativize the sober fact that the historian simply cannot speak of an unbroken unity of New Testament ecclesiology'.<sup>24</sup>

The immediate reaction of W. A. Visser 't Hooft, the General Secretary of the WCC was that if the ideas of Käsemann gained acceptance, the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches would be doomed. In the opinion of Flesseman van Leer, herself a member of the Faith and Order Commission, Visser 't Hooft expressed the general mood of the meeting. For if it was necessary to recognize an irreconcilable diversity in the Canon, the words 'according to the Scriptures' adopted just two years earlier, would lose

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<sup>19</sup> *The New Delhi Report* (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> 'The Church and the Churches', *The Ecumenical Review*, 1 (1948–1949), pp. 156–57.

<sup>22</sup> Gaines, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>23</sup> *The New Delhi Report*, p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> Flesseman van Leer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

much of their force. If the reports could not be Biblically grounded they could not be ecumenically unifying either.

Käsemann was not alone in his view of a 'theological' pluralism in the Scripture itself. Others (such as Gerhard von Rad) claimed for the Old Testament what Käsemann had claimed for the New. Soon there were claims not just of a diversity in ecclesiology, but in other teachings as well.

There were other factors besides the view of a theological diversity within the New Testament Canon which caused the WCC to question the validity and usefulness of the Biblical Theology approach. Inherent in the very approach itself was the sanctioning of the critical method which allowed the scholar to sit in judgment upon the text and from that stance determine whether a passage in the text was or was not a witness to the Word of God. Then also, as the historical character of the text of the Bible was accentuated, the method of harmonizing fell more and more into disfavor.

An experience within WCC circles also greatly accelerated the trend away from the Biblical Theology approach to a pluralistic view. At Wadham (1949) there developed a '*cul de sac* from p. 169 which there seemed to be no way out. We simply discovered how widely separated we were from one another.' However, the atmosphere began to clear up immediately when the participants opened the Old Testament itself and began to interpret it in fellowship with one another. 'Divisions then appeared to be almost non-existent.'<sup>25</sup> Similarly at the Lund Conference (1952) when the delegates could not make further progress towards unity by talking about doctrinal differences, they found it a relief to read the Bible together.<sup>26</sup>

The effect of these incidents was to raise doubt whether the Bible was indeed a unifying element in the ecumenical movement. At least the question arose concerning the unifying force of the then current *ideas* about Biblical authority.

The 'experiences' of Wadham and Lund showed that what dogmatic theology, including that of the Biblical Theology sort, could not do, the ecumenical experience was able to accomplish. The effect on the WCC of experiencing how important *experience* is was deep and lasting. To trace this development we should consider further the effects of the Montreal 1963 assembly of the Faith and Order Commission.

The Montreal Conference did more than allow the yeast of a critical approach issuing in a diversity of theologies in the Bible to enter the ecumenical discussion. It also placed greater stress upon tradition in the Church. Thus, while at the same time affirming the once-for-all directives of the Bible and appealing to the revealed truth, the report brought the Bible into direct relation with the Church's teaching.

At the same meeting the question of the Church's interpretation of the Bible was broached, and it was recognized that there is a hermeneutical problem. Montreal asked, 'How (can we) reach an adequate interpretation of the Scriptures so that the Word of God addresses us, and Scripture is safe-guarded from subjective or arbitrary exegesis?'<sup>27</sup> Here it was recognized that only in the tradition (*paradosis*) of the proclamation (*kerygma*) do Christians have access to the redeeming acts of God, that is p. 170 to say, through and in human thought and interpretation. Thus the Bible is the written form of tradition and has to be interpreted by the Church in ever new situations.

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<sup>25</sup> *Minutes of the Central Committee*, p. 96; quoted by Gaines, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>26</sup> Gaines, *op. cit.*, p. 732.

<sup>27</sup> *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Rodger, P. C. and Lukas Vischer, eds. (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 54.



Montreal struggled with the question: What is the criterion by which to evaluate the various traditions of the churches? It answered this question by saying that it is 'the Holy Scriptures rightly interpreted'.<sup>28</sup> But then the question followed, What is right interpretation? To this there was no immediate answer, for:

In some confessional traditions the accepted hermeneutical principle has been that any portion of Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture as a whole. In others the key has been sought in what is considered to be the center of Holy Scripture, and the emphasis has been primarily on the Incarnation, or on the Atonement and Redemption, or on justification by faith, or again on the message of the nearness of the Kingdom of God, or on the ethical teachings of Jesus. In yet others, all emphasis is laid upon what Scripture says to the individual conscience, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox Church the hermeneutical key is found in the mind of the Church, especially as expressed in the Fathers of the Church and in the Ecumenical Councils. In the Roman Catholic Church the key is found in the deposit of faith, of which the Church's *magisterium* is the guardian. In other traditions again the creeds, complemented by confessional documents or by the definitions of Ecumenical Councils and the witness of the Fathers, are considered to give the right key to the understanding of Scripture. In none of these cases where the principle of interpretation is found elsewhere than in Scripture is the authority thought to be alien to the central concept of Holy Scripture. On the contrary, it is considered as providing just a key to the understanding of what is said in Scripture.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the quest for a 'hermeneutical' principle by which to determine what right interpretation is was started. This quest would lead to the report of Bristol (1967) and Louvain (1971). It would result, further, in the sanctioning of diverging theologies in the p. 171 Bible and in stressing the idea of a functional authority in human experience, and in emphasizing the continuity of the Bible's interpretation with the on-going interpretation in the Church.

#### IV. BIBLICAL PLURALISM

The new climate initiated at Montreal appeared clearly in the 1964 Bristol Conference of the Faith and Order Commission. A report at this conference on 'The Significance of the Hermeneutical Problem for the Ecumenical Movement' questioned whether the Bible can any longer be regarded as a unity. While some passages may be considered complementary, others (such as the future of Israel in [1 Thessalonians 2:14-16](#) and [Romans 11:25ff.](#)) can only be viewed as contradictory.<sup>30</sup> Bristol made the admission that there are confessional divisions within the canonical books themselves.

Nevertheless the Bristol conference held that 'the Bible is a given fact in the church'.<sup>31</sup> The conference was not ready to face, or did not see the full consequences of, the 'new direction' that Montreal had instigated. However, in the time following, these consequences would soon appear, in fact within very few years.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *New Directions in Faith and Order: Bristol 1967* (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.



Commenting on the Bristol report, Dr. Flesseman van Leer observed that its thought process was dominated by the fact that the Bible is a collection of documents written by men.<sup>32</sup> Naturally, then, the accent fell on the diversity of the Bible.

James Barr submitted to the conference at Louvain four years later a study outline on the authority of the Bible. His outline was based on the consultation arranged by the Faith and Order Commission in Boldern near Zurich in 1968. In this outline he too raised the possibility of basic theological disagreement within the Bible itself.<sup>33</sup> Thus the Church was faced with making a choice 'within the totality of the Bible'. He admitted that there was disagreement about the degree of finality that could be expected to attach to the Bible, *even if rightly interpreted*, as a source p. 172 of Christian truth.<sup>34</sup> He granted, further, in a palpable understatement, that the historical-critical method is not necessarily committed to a recognition of the canonical documents as a special group.<sup>35</sup> His conclusion was that the Bible can no longer be assumed to be the uniquely unifying element in the ecumenical movement.<sup>36</sup>

The upshot of Barr's outline was that a new method of approaching the question of Biblical authority was started. The study groups 'should approach the study of Biblical authority *not* by a general consideration of Biblical authority abstracted from the exegetical situation, but *by the interpretation of particular Biblical passages in their relation to a chosen theme*' (italics in original).<sup>37</sup> The reasons given for this far-reaching change in approach were that it would allow the study on hermeneutics to go on, would less likely result in passing by the problem of the diversity in the Bible, and would enable a study in which a 'double line' of considering questions arising from the text as well as questions coming from our situation.<sup>38</sup> All this reflected the growing conviction that the 'secure authority which the Old Testament appeared to have during the "Biblical theology" period has largely dissolved in some areas in the more recent change of climate'.<sup>39</sup>

The meeting of Faith and Order in Louvain, 1971, in response to Barr's outline, took a position that more explicitly than Bristol held that the Bible, which both records events and interprets these events, has in it a great variety of interpretations. 'Application of the methods of historical criticism has also brought out more clearly than ever the diversity of the Biblical witness. The individual passages and traditions of the Bible are all aligned to specific historical situations and the Bible is the collection of these diverse testimonies'.<sup>40</sup>

Since the Bible is both event and interpretation, the criterion by which one evaluates the divergent interpretations within the Bible is 'to what extent an interpretation interprets a central p. 173 saving event attested in the Scripture and is rooted in that

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<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> *New Directions in Faith and Order*, p. 136.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>40</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971*, p. 11.

saving event'.<sup>41</sup> At this point one can see that the central events still had decisive significance.

A new element closely related to the central events was the reference made to the Bible's 'relational centers' (*Beziehungsmitten*). These are decisive centers in Scripture to which the Biblical witness is related. Examples are the love of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But no one relational center is exclusive of others, and not all of them can be considered complementary. Therefore 'it is often impossible to adopt the Biblical interpretation today without qualification'.<sup>42</sup>

Louvain sought to allay certain misgivings and stated that the fear that historical criticism would destroy the authority of the Bible and with it the Christian faith itself is 'ultimately baseless'. For 'When we speak of the "authority" of the Bible in the strict sense, we mean that it makes the Word of God audible and is therefore able to lead men to faith'.<sup>43</sup> Here an appeal was made to the Bible's *function and to human experience*. These we should now examine in somewhat greater detail.

## V. AUTHORITY AND EXPERIENCE

The Louvain Conference asked the question: 'How are we to approach the Bible so that, through the Biblical text, God may speak to us authoritatively today?'<sup>44</sup> In the question itself is the assumption that for the Scripture to be authoritative something more is needed than the fact that God caused it to be written. Scripture *must prove* itself in experience to be authoritative. Scripture must speak to us today in our experience to have force upon our lives.

This was understood at Louvain to mean that the Bible needs no external basis, but must prove itself by the impact of its message.<sup>45</sup> This led to the idea of a functional, non-*a priori* view of Biblical authority, and of a situation-conditioned hermeneutic p. 174 perspective.<sup>46</sup> This was the answer Louvain gave to the question it posed.

James Barr, whose influence at this stage was considerable, observed that in modern times the majority view is that the Bible functions primarily as a mode of access to primitive revelation given in past history.<sup>47</sup> It is what the Bible does that is important. The functional use of the Bible, he explains, means not to work out from authority in the sense of what things ought to be, but rather to start from things as they are, to observe the modes in which texts are actually used in and in what ways they actually affect Church life.<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein, Flesseman van Leer stated that only if the Biblical testimonies have proved themselves to be authoritative can we confess in faith that they are inspired.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain*, pp. 16–7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Flesseman van Leer, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>49</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 7. Ellen Flesseman van Leer, 'freelance theologian', as she calls herself never tires of stressing that the Bible must be experienced as having authority in order to be authoritative. Authority by itself just

Reflecting the views of Barr and Flesseman van Leer, the Louvain report states, 'Authority is therefore a present reality only when men experience it as authority; at the same time, it transcends human experience.'<sup>50</sup>

There is one additional element to emphasize, namely, that in the Bible we deal with interpretation itself no less than we do in the Church. Moreover there is a continuity between the Bible's interpretation and that of the Church.<sup>51</sup> The various interpretations contained in the Bible should be understood as an interpretative process into which we must enter in our own way. At this point the distinction between a basic normative interpretation, as given in the canonical books, and a lesser, derived normative interpretation by Church and theology either does not function or fades into the background. In other words, the emphasis upon continuity between Biblical interpretation and post-Biblical interpretation p. 175 is not balanced with a stress upon the discontinuity between them.

That human experience, then, is not an incidental element in the WCC's view of the Bible's authority but a constitutive component will be seen when one pulls together the various elements, namely, that if authority is to be such it must function in human experience, that there is continuity between interpretation in the Bible and in the Church in post-Biblical times, and that we should work out, not from things as they ought to be, but from things as they are. Little wonder that following this extensive discussion at Wadham and Louvain the great stress in the WCC has fallen far more upon the situation or context of the Bible than on the text of the Bible itself. For it is in the current context that our experience occurs. It should therefore be no surprise that Philip Potter should state that to appeal to what the Bible says has become out of date.

One should not conclude at this point, however, that for the WCC the Bible has been abandoned as a source and standard of authority. To the contrary, the widespread phenomenon of Bible study at WCC assemblies gives some warrant for proponents of the new view of the Bible to claim that the actual text of the Bible is being taken more seriously today than it was, e.g., during the 'Biblical Theology' period. Gone, they say, is the tendency to superimpose a dogmatic strait jacket on all Biblical texts and as a result the specific wordings, structure and message are being taken much more seriously. While there is less stress upon the Bible's teaching of Biblical authority, there is greater emphasis upon the practice of Bible study.

Nor should it be overlooked, as has been done by some evangelicals, that the same passage that states that authority must be experienced, also states that the Bible transcends authority. The Bible is still a court of appeal.

One may perhaps summarize the role of experience and the Bible in the WCC's view of Biblical authority by comparing them with a set of mutually supporting rafters. It is not the Bible apart from experience, nor experience apart from the Bible, but experience in correlation to the Bible. If the rafters on the one p. 176 side give way, so do the ones on the other side and the roof collapses.<sup>52</sup>

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does not exist, or, if it does, has no meaning for us. Her attack is especially strong against the evangelical view which she calls *a priori*; that is, prior to one's having experienced that the Bible speaks authoritatively in this life, one affirms that the Bible is authoritative simply because the Bible claims authority. That passages such as [II Timothy 3:16](#) and [II Peter 1:20, 21](#) should be used to settle the matter of Biblical authority must, in her view, be rejected out of hand.

<sup>50</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain* 1971, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> The figure of mutually supporting rafters may be misleading. It should not convey the idea of complementary ideas of equal significance, for while they are mutually interdependent, the idea of human

#### IV. CONSEQUENCES OF THE WCC'S USE OF THE BIBLE

The World Council of Churches has as its aim the promotion of the unity of the churches of the world. It was thought at one stage that the Bible was a unifying factor in this process of promoting church unity. The ecumenical movement in the beginning emphasized the unity of the Biblical message as a rallying-point for uniting a divided Christendom. But what happens when it is admitted that there are differences and conflicts *within the canonical books themselves* similar to that among the churches? It would appear at first blush that a divided Bible would lead to a divided Church. However, if one listens to advocates of the new view, the opposite is the case and the new view of the Bible abets rather than hinders the ecumenical movement.

James Barr observed in 1969 that, whereas in the older discussions unity was thought of as the theologically positive factor and diversity as negative, in more recent time there came a wider recognition that the study of the diversity of the Bible would provide fresh positive insights into the authority of the Bible.<sup>53</sup>

Already at Bristol (1967) it was stated that 'the awareness of the differences in the Bible will lead us toward a deeper understanding of our divisions and will help us to interpret them more readily as possible and legitimate interpretations of one and the same Gospel'.<sup>54</sup> Thus, as Flesseman van Leer expressed it, what was thought to be an obstacle actually proved to be a gain. The gain was that *the theological differences in the Bible legitimated the theological differences among the churches*. In order to promote the unity of the Church, it would be very helpful to recognize that there is a plurality even within the canonical writings which may not be harmonized away. p. 177

A second consequence of the 'new direction' regarding the Bible was that, since authority must be experienced in order to be recognized, there should continue to be much Bible study. For it is in the process of Bible study that the experience occurs in which the Bible *functions as authoritative*. Not wanting to relinquish the hold of the Bible on the churches, and given the theological diversity of the Canon itself, the stress must fall upon the study experience of the ecumenical assembly, preferably in small groups, in which the Bible gives access to the primitive witness to revelation, and, hopefully, a shared experience of what God is saying.

A third consequence is the great openness to dialogue in which the churches give account of what is held in common in their faith. Since experience is such a prominent component, it is in the experience of giving account of one's faith and hope that the meaning of the Bible's authority is best understood.

Louvain sums up the consequences of the new direction in four points: (1) We should not regard the Bible as a standard to which we must conform in all the questions in our life. (2) We should read the Bible in the expectation that it can disclose the truth to us. That is, we should read it in anticipation of its disclosure. (3) The Bible is a critical book. It is impossible to fit it into the prevailing thought of the day. It is a court of appeal to which the Church must constantly defer. (4) The nexus between event and interpretation means that we should abandon the restricted form of inquiry as to the historicity of the

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experience takes on far greater significance in the current debate than does the idea of the Bible's transcendence over human experience.

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>54</sup> *New Directions in Faith and Order*, p. 41.

Biblically attested events and the meaning of the Biblical witness.<sup>55</sup> Due account must be given to the context, especially the cultural context today.

At Louvain, a committee in its evaluation of the Report on the authority of the Bible called for abandoning the static concept of authority and a mechanistic understanding of inspiration. This, in the committee's opinion, does not undermine the authority of Scripture, since that is grounded in the authority of God who once revealed himself in Jesus Christ and who is today active in the exposition and proclamation of the witness of the primitive church.<sup>56</sup> p. 178

The events in the WCC since Louvain clearly show that World Council hermeneutics have been dominated by Louvain. This means an emphasis on situational hermeneutics in which the tendency is to give more emphasis to the context than the text, to lay more stress on the diversity than the unity, and to give more attention to the collation of various human experiences of salvation than to the exposition of a body of Biblical truth concerning the nature and extent of, e.g. salvation today.

Thus the study of *Salvation Today* at the Bangkok (1972/3) Conference 'concentrated on ways in which the theme (salvation) could be approached in close relation to one's actual experience. In the experience of the early Christians (who surely did not choose an ancient text and then apply it to their experience of the Lord's living among them) the usual procedure of selecting Bible texts and then applying them to contemporary experience (at Bangkok) was deliberately reversed'.<sup>57</sup> This, however, is not to deny that there were several lengthy Biblical preparations before and at the conference, some of which were not published in English. It is to say that experience has become the heavy side of the scale.

In Bangkok and Nairobi it was not so much what the WCC said about the Bible, but what it did with the Bible. At both there were many small Bible study groups. For both, Bible study outlines had been included in the preparatory documents. Thus when an evangelical makes the observation that the WCC ignores the Bible in its deliberations, the prompt and legitimate response from the WCC devotee is to refer to the extensive Bible study actually going on in the conferences and assemblies.

In reading through the reports from the six sections at Nairobi, one is struck by the fact that references to the authority of the Bible are scant, but references to the text of the Bible, at least in some of the reports, especially 'Confessing Christ Today', are many.

Therefore one cannot conclude that the regnant ideas about Biblical authority in the studies conducted by the World Council of Churches tell the whole story, for these ideas have not become legal tender for the entire WCC membership. So, when these churches assemble to prepare reports on the basis of preparatory p. 179 documents, the finished products are a mixture of the regnant ideas of the study department and the views that the delegates bring along from their churches, culture and convictions. The results, therefore, cannot be predicted ahead of time and each document must be judged on its own merit. One thing is sure, one should not ignore the effect of the study documents on the Bible's authority.

Nairobi decided that higher priority should be given to the portfolio on Biblical Studies and that particular attention should be given to developing liaison with Bible fellowships, societies and movements. It requested that a distinct effort should be made 'to achieve an

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<sup>55</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain* 1971, pp. 21–2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>57</sup> *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 1968–1975, Johnson, David E., ed. (New York: Friendship Press, 1975), p. 83.

inter-cultural awareness of how the Bible is understood, reckoning that such a cross-fertilization may facilitate a better ecumenical understanding among Christians'.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, while the hope that the decisions of the Council will be 'Biblically grounded' has been severely shaken, the expectation that the study of the Bible will be 'ecumenically unifying' lives on. 'Above all, how is the Bible to be so interpreted that there may be a genuine unity in Christ?'<sup>59</sup>

## VII. THE EVANGELICAL CONTRIBUTION

Before concluding this paper, we should return to a matter we broached at the beginning, namely, the evangelical contribution to the debate on the Bible in the WCC. Evangelicals within the WCC have (understandably) made a larger contribution to the discussion on Biblical authority than those who belong to churches which are not affiliated with the Council. That the latter have not done more is to be regretted, for on such an important topic all evangelicals should want their voice to be heard.

To attempt such a contribution in the current debate would be meaningful because of the *de facto* appeal that is still being made in WCC assemblies and documents to the message of the Bible. It is still a source book for the statements of ecumenical gatherings. The WCC still claims to operate 'according to the Scriptures'. The evangelical voice can still be heard and its impact can easily be seen, especially in those areas of study (such as p. 180 in evangelism and dialogue) where the evangelicals have concentrated their efforts.

Such a contribution, as well from evangelicals outside the WCC as from those within, is said to be welcome by WCC officials, even though evangelicals within have often felt neglected. To make an input, at least in the discussion on the printed page, will be especially important in the next few years in which the WCC study of the Bible will be given extensive attention.

Evangelicals still maintain that declarations can be both Biblically true and ecumenically unifying and that 'in the unity of the true faith' one can meaningfully seek to manifest the oneness of the Church, the people of God. This is the time for them to authenticate this claim.

Evangelicals have long affirmed that when the Church condones historical criticism of the Bible that allows one to sit in judgment upon the Scriptures to determine whether they do or do not witness to the Word of God, the Church has condoned within its midst a disruptive, disunifying force. There has perhaps never been a better opportunity for evangelicals to show that their view of *sola Scriptura* can be a unifying force than today in the ecumenical forum.

*Further comments on this subject will be included in the next issue of ERT—Editor*

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<sup>58</sup> *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975*, Paton, David M., ed. (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 313.

<sup>59</sup> *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971*, p. 23.



# Controversy at Culture Gap

by ROBERT C. SPROUL

UNLESS WE maintain that the Bible fell down from heaven on a parachute, inscribed by a peculiar heavenly language uniquely suited as a vehicle for divine revelation, or that the Bible was dictated directly and immediately by God without reference to any local custom, style, or perspective, we are going to have to face the culture gap. That is, the Bible reflects the culture of its day, so how can it have authority over us in our day?

In 1967 the United Presbyterian Church in the USA adopted a new confession with the following statement concerning the Bible:

The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.

These words of the Confession of 1967 engendered a great deal of dialogue, debate, and controversy during the decade of the 60s. At issue was the sense and degree of *conditioning* ancient culture had on the formation of the Scriptures. Many conservatives manifested great distress to think that the Bible was conditioned in *any* sense by ancient culture. Many liberals argued that Scripture was not only 'conditioned' by culture but was 'bound' by it.

Unfortunately, the confession did not spell out in detail what was meant by the statement. Considering the statement merely in terms of its words, neither the orthodox B. B. Warfield nor the liberal Rudolf Bultmann could assent to it. The real issue remains [p. 182](#) and crosses denominational lines: To what extent is the Bible's relevance limited by changing human structures and perspectives in the Biblical text?

In order to produce an accurate exegesis of a Biblical text and understand what was said and what was meant, the student of Scripture must be involved with questions of languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic), style, syntax, historical and geographical context, author, destination, literary genre. This kind of analysis is necessary for interpreting any body of literature—even contemporary literature.

In a word, the better I understand the 1st century culture of Palestine, the easier it becomes for me to have an accurate understanding of what was being said. But the Bible was written a long time ago and it is not always easy to bridge the sheer chasm of time between the 1st century and the 20th century.

The problem becomes more complicated when I realize that not only is the Bible conditioned by its cultural setting, but I am conditioned by my cultural setting as well. It sometimes becomes very difficult for me to hear and understand what the Bible is saying because I bring to it a host of extra-Biblical assumptions. In fact it is probably the problem of the influence of the 20th century secular mind-set that is the more formidable obstacle of the two.

The classical Reformed method of Biblical interpretation sought to approach exegesis in terms of the *tabula rasa* ('blank tablet') ideal. That is, the interpreter was expected to strive as much as possible for an objective reading of the text through the grammatico-historical approach. Though subjective influences always present a clear and present danger of distortion, the student of the Bible was expected to utilize every possible



safeguard in the pursuit of the ideal, listening to the message of Scripture without mixing in his own prejudices.

The existential method has sharply departed from the classical method by means of a new hermeneutic (hermeneutics is the science of interpretation). Rudolf Bultmann, for example, not only maintains that a *tabula rasa* approach is unattainable but insists that it is undesirable. Because the Bible was written in a prescientific age and is substantially the result of the formative influence of the life-situation of the early Church, Bultmann calls for a necessary 'prior understanding' before we come to the text [p. 183](#) at all. If modern man is to get any valid answers to his questions from the Bible, he must first come to the Bible with the right questions. Those questions can only be provided from a proper philosophical understanding of human existence. Such an understanding, however, is not gleaned from Scripture, but must be formulated prior to coming to Scripture. Here the 20th century blatantly conditions and binds the 1st century texts. (Bultmann finds his prior understanding within the broad framework of Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy.) The net result is a method that moves inexorably towards a subjective Bible removed from its history. The 1st century collapses under the 20th.

## INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

Even if Biblical interpreters can agree on a method of exegesis and can agree on the exegesis of Scripture itself, we are still left with the questions of application, relevance, and obligation imposed by the text. If we agree that the Bible was inspired by God and was not merely the product of prescientific authors, we are still faced with questions of application. Does what the Bible commands 1st century Christians to do apply to us? In what sense do the Scriptures bind our consciences today?

The issue in many circles today is the issue of principle and custom. Unless we conclude that all of Scripture is principle or that all of Scripture is local custom, we are forced to establish categories and guidelines for discerning the difference.

If we take the position that everything is principle then some radical changes must be made in evangelism if we are going to be obedient. Jesus says, 'Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way' ([Luke 10:4](#)). If we make this text a trans-cultural principle then it's time for Billy Graham to start preaching in his bare feet! Obviously the point of this text is not to set down a perennial requirement of barefooted evangelism.

However, other matters concerning Biblical commands are not so obvious for distinguishing custom and principle. Christians remain divided, for example, on the foot-washing rite. Is this a perpetual mandate for the Church of all ages or is it a local custom illustrating a principle of humble servanthood?

To illustrate the dilemma let us examine the head-covering [p. 184](#) passage of [1 Corinthians 11](#). The RSV translates this to require a woman's covering her head with a veil when she prophesies. In applying this text to our modern culture we have basically four options:

- (1) *It is entirely customary*—The whole passage is a cultural custom requiring a woman to cover her head with a veil to symbolize her submission to the man. Since we live in a different culture, it is no longer necessary for a woman to cover her head with anything and it is no longer necessary for women to be submissive to men.
- (2) *It is entirely principle*—If we take this approach to the passage then we must apply it by insisting that the woman is still to be submissive, that the woman is still to cover her head, and that the woman must cover her head with a veil.

- (3) *It is partly principle*—Option (A)—The principle of female submission is trans-cultural but the means of expressing it (covering the head with a veil) are customary and may be changed.
- (4) *It is partly principle*—Option (B)—The principle of female submission and the symbolic act of covering the head are to be perpetual. The article of covering may vary from culture to culture. A veil may be replaced by a babushka or a hat, etc.

How do we determine what alternative application is pleasing to God? I certainly do not know the final answer to these difficult questions. However, I would like to offer some practical guidelines to the problem.

## **PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

### **1. Examine the Bible itself for apparent areas of custom.**

By doing this we can see that the Scriptures themselves have a certain latitude of custom. For example, divine principles from the Old Testament culture have been restated in a New Testament culture, suggesting a common core that transcends custom, culture and social convention.

Obviously, too, the Old Testament laws can be communicated by the Greek language. This obvious matter gives us at least a clue to the variable nature of verbal communication. That is, [p. 185](#) *language* is a cultural aspect that is open to change, not that the Biblical content may be distorted linguistically, but that the Gospel can be preached in English as well as Greek.

Secondly, we see that Old Testament styles of dress are not fixed perpetually for God's people. Principles of modesty prevail but local styles of dress may change. Other normal cultural differences such as monetary systems are clearly open to change.

Such an analysis of cultural modes of expression may be simple with respect to clothes and money, but matters of cultural institutions are more difficult. For example, slavery has often been introduced into modern controversies over civil obedience and marital structures of authority. In the same context that Paul calls women to be submissive to husbands, he calls slaves to be submissive to their masters. Some have argued that since the seeds of the abolition of slavery are sown in the New Testament, so also are the seeds of the abolition of female subordination likewise sown. Both represent institutional structures that are culturally conditioned.

Here we must be very careful to distinguish between institutions the Bible merely *recognizes* and those which the Bible positively institutes, endorses, and ordains. The principle of submission to existing authority structures (such as the Roman government) does not carry with it a necessary implication of God's endorsement of those structures but merely a call to humility and civil obedience. God, in his ultimate providence, may ordain that there be a Caesar Augustus without endorsing Caesar as a model of Christian virtue. Yet in the institution of marriage—in Genesis there is a positive commandment and endorsement with respect to the structure of the home. Thus the Scriptures provide a basis for Christian behavior in the midst of oppressive or evil situations as well as ordaining structures that are to mirror the good designs of creation. To put the Biblical structures of the home on a par with the slavery question is to obscure the difference between the two.

### **2. Allowing Christian distinctives in the 1st century.**

It is one thing to seek a more lucid understanding of the Biblical content by investigating the cultural situation of the 1st century; it is quite another to interpret the

New Testament as if it were merely an echo of the 1st century culture. To do so would be to fail to account for the serious conflict the Church experienced as [p. 186](#) it confronted the 1st century culture and the 1st century world.

Some very subtle means of relativizing the text occur by reading into the text cultural considerations that ought not to be there. For example, with respect to the hair-covering issue in Corinth, numerous commentators on the Epistle point out that the local sign of the prostitute in Corinth was the uncovered head. Therefore, the argument runs, the reason why Paul wanted women to cover their heads was to avoid a scandalous appearance of Christian women in the external guise of prostitutes.

What's wrong with this kind of speculation? The basic problem here is that our reconstructed knowledge of 1st century Corinth has led us to supply Paul with a rationale that is foreign to the one he gives himself. In a word, we are not only putting words into the Apostle's mouth that are not there, but we are ignoring words that are there. If Paul merely told women in Corinth to cover their heads and gave no rationale we would be strongly inclined to supply it via our cultural knowledge.

In this case, however, the Apostle does provide a rationale which is based on an appeal to creation, not the custom of Corinthian harlots. We must be careful not to let our zeal for knowledge of the culture obscure what is actually said. To subordinate Paul's stated reason to our speculatively conceived reason is to slander the Apostle and turn exegesis into eisegesis.

### **3. Appeals to creation ordinances are indicators of trans-cultural principle.**

If any Biblical principles transcend local customary limits, they are the principles drawn from creation. Appeals to creation ordinances reflect stipulations a covenant God makes with man *qua* man. The laws of creation are not given to man as Hebrew or man as Christian or man as Corinthian, etc., but are rooted in basic human responsibility to God. To set principles of creation aside as mere local custom is the worst kind of relativizing and de-historicizing of the Biblical content. Yet it is precisely at this point that many evangelical scholars have relativized New Testament principles. Here we see the existential method operating most blatantly.

To illustrate the importance of creation ordinances we can examine Jesus' treatment of the divorce question. When the Pharisees tested Jesus by asking if divorce was lawful for any [p. 187](#) cause, Jesus responded by citing the creation ordinance of marriage: 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause a man shall leave ... what therefore God has joined together, let no man separate' ([Matthew 19:4-6](#)).

By reconstructing the life-situation of this narrative, it is easy to see that the 'test' of the Pharisees involved getting Jesus' opinion on an issue which divided sharply the Rabbinic Schools of Shammai and Hillel. Rather than siding with either, Jesus took the matter back to creation to get the norms of marriage in perspective. To be sure, he acknowledged the Mosaic modification of the law of creation, but refused to weaken the norm further by yielding to public pressure or the cultural opinions of his contemporaries. The inference to be drawn is that the creation ordinances are normative unless explicitly modified by later Biblical revelation.

### **4. Uncertainty and humility.**

What if, after careful consideration of a Biblical mandate, we remain uncertain as to the question of its character as principle or custom? If we must decide to treat it one way or the other but have no conclusive means to make the decision, what can we do? Here the Biblical principle of humility can be helpful. The issue is simple—would it be better to

treat a possible custom as a principle and be guilty of being overscrupulous in our design to obey God; or would it be better to treat a possible principle as a custom and be guilty of being unscrupulous in demoting a transcendent requirement of God to the level of a mere human convention? I hope the answer is obvious.

If this humility principle is isolated from the other guidelines mentioned, it could easily be misconstrued as grounds for legalism. The humility principle does not mean that we have the right to legislate the consciences of Christians where God has left them free. It cannot be applied in a normative way where Scripture is silent. The principle applies where we have Biblical mandates whose nature remains uncertain (as to custom and principle) after all the arduous labor of exegesis has been exhausted. To short-circuit such labor by a blanket scrupulosity would obscure the distinction between custom and principle. This is a guideline of last resort and would be destructive if used as a first resort.

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## The East African Revival—African Initiative Within a European Tradition

by BRIAN STANLEY

IN 1877 the first missionaries of the Church Missionary Society arrived at the court of Kabaka Mutesa, the ruler of the kingdom of Buganda; a kingdom lying at the heart of what is now Uganda, which had risen during the 19th century to pre-eminence among its neighbours.<sup>1</sup> European missions in Africa at this time were winning most of their converts from amongst marginal groups at the fringes of traditional society. In Buganda, however, the story was very different. Christianity offered the Kabaka and his supporters the ideological weapon they needed in their attempts to assert his authority against the representatives of the traditional gods, and with remarkable rapidity the political *elite* aligned themselves either with the Anglican missionaries or with their Roman Catholic rivals. In the tumultuous conditions associated with the advent of British influence and then rule, Bugandan politics assumed a strongly religious flavour, and it was the Protestant party which emerged from the Uganda Agreement of 1900 as the chief beneficiary of the colonial *concordat* with the British. Protestantism was thus entrenched as the virtual established religion in Buganda, and Anglican baptism followed by Anglican education became the accepted route to social and political advancement. In a context of intense Protestant-Roman Catholic rivalry, the Catholic policy of mass baptisms

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<sup>1</sup> The first draft of this article was presented to a meeting of the Historians' Study Group of the UCCF Associates on 26 March 1977. I owe an especial debt to Dr. Joe Church, who kindly gave me free access to his autobiographical account of the Revival and answered many of my questions. The responsibility for the interpretation of the Revival advanced in this article is, of course, entirely my own.

prompted the Anglicans to follow p. 189 suit, and thus to accelerate the spread of a nominal Christianity throughout Uganda.<sup>2</sup>

The evangelical Anglicans of the CMS were not slow to diagnose the shallowness of the conversion of so many of their adherents, and to prescribe revival as the only remedy. Revival on a limited scale came as early as 1893, largely through the influence of the CMS missionary G. L. Pilkington, whose leadership was strongly coloured by the model of D. L. Moody's recent revival campaigns in Britain. A mission for the deepening of the spiritual life of the Ugandan Church in 1906 was similarly fashioned on the pattern of the evangelistic campaigns of Torrey and Alexander.<sup>3</sup> The impact of such movements was, however, temporary and localized. The Ugandan Church continued to expand both geographically and numerically, but the spiritual foundations were shallow.

In 1920 the CMS authorized two young missionary doctors, Len Sharp and Algie Stanley Smith, to commence work in the Belgian territory of Rwanda, although the financial support for the new mission for the first four years was to be raised independently of the CMS by the two doctors themselves.<sup>4</sup> Political difficulties rendered immediate entry into Rwanda impossible, and in consequence the Ruanda Mission, as it later became, began work in the Kigezi district of Uganda. Work in Rwanda itself began in 1925, and in the following year the existence of the Ruanda Mission as an independently supported auxiliary of the CMS was formalized by the establishment of a Home Council.<sup>5</sup> The Mission began work in the neighbouring kingdom of Burundi in 1935.<sup>6</sup>

## SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

In June 1928 a young Cambridge doctor, Joe Church, arrived at Gahini, the first station established by the Mission in Rwanda itself, to take charge of the as yet unfinished hospital there.<sup>7</sup> Joe Church's first year at Gahini was dominated by the experience of a severe famine throughout Rwanda and in September 1929, P. 190 physically and spiritually exhausted, he returned to Kampala for a holiday. There he was greeted by a young African, Simeoni Nsibambi, who had heard Dr. Church speak about 'surrendering all to Jesus' at a Bible class run by Mabel Ensor<sup>8</sup> in Kampala in March. Simeoni complained that he had 'surrendered all to Jesus', but that there still seemed to be something missing. The two men went away to spend several hours together with a Scofield Bible, tracing through the chain references to the subject of the Holy Spirit. The result for both men was a spiritual transformation. Joe Church related the experience in a letter to his prayer partners in the CICC (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union), which concluded with the significant statement:

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<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is based on D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 13–52.

<sup>3</sup> J. V. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda* (London: SCM Press, etc. 1958), pp. 96–7.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia St. John, *Breath of Life: The Story of the Ruanda Mission* (London: Norfolk Press, 1971), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Mabel Ensor subsequently set up her own church. See F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels* (London: SCM Press, 1961), pp. 59–76.



There could be a Revival in the Uganda Church if there was someone who could come, Spirit filled, and point these thousands of nominal Christians to the Victorious Life.<sup>9</sup>

From now on, signs of spiritual awakening began to appear at Gahini.<sup>10</sup> Yet relations between Joe Church and his African hospital staff were strained, principally owing to his insistence that they should combine their hospital duties with village evangelism, and consequently should be paid on the same level as the village evangelists. The senior hospital boy,<sup>11</sup> Yosiya Kinuka, led the resistance to the doctor. In January 1931 Joe Church, as a last resort, sent Yosiya to see Simeoni Nsibambi in Kampala. Nsibambi offered Yosiya no sympathy, insisting that the fault lay not with the doctor but with Yosiya's own unrepentant heart.<sup>12</sup> Yosiya returned to Gahini with a markedly changed attitude. Joe Church wrote home on 5 May:

He has come back an absolutely changed life. There is no doubt that an African can have a 'second blessing', if you like to call it so. He got to work at once to stamp out sin among the other boys, chiefly drinking, and work has gone ahead very much spiritually since ...<sup>13</sup> p. 191

Yosiya Kinuka and Simeoni's brother Blasio, the head teacher at Gahini, now set to work as a team to call the African Christians at Gahini to true repentance and conversion such as they had themselves experienced. By February 1932 Joe Church could report:

We have seen teachers who at one time were always weak and grouching, now suffering persecution and hardship gladly for Christ. We have seen many cases of senior Christians who at one time thought little of slipping a few of our francs or other things into their pockets when no one was looking, coming up voluntarily to confess and restore the things ... Above all I can say, without the slightest shadow of doubt, that I have seen Africans truly saved and living really changed lives. I have learnt that at heart the African is by no means such a child as he is made out to be, and that his sense of sin, his need, and his spiritual experiences are the same as our own.<sup>14</sup>

African spiritual experience was overturning missionary preconceptions, but leaving intact the categories of spiritual explanation which the missionaries had learnt from their theological background: they discovered that the African Christian was not destined to perpetual spiritual inferiority, but was on the contrary capable of a conversion which conformed in all essential respects to their own. Until December 1933 the movement of new spiritual life at Gahini proceeded relatively quietly. At Christmas, Joe Church held an African convention on Keswick lines at Gahini, which yielded no apparent fruit until the final prayer meeting, when, after half an hour, one of the 'revived' Christians, Kosiya Shalita, left the meeting to complain to Joe that he could not stand it any longer:

People praying these beautiful long prayers, many of them were hypocrites, he knew it, and needed to be broken down before God ... A remarkable thing then happened a few

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<sup>9</sup> *Quest for the Highest or An autobiographical account of the East African Revival Movement* (unpublished typescript in possession of Dr. J. E. Church), pp. 54–5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66; and *Ruanda Notes*, No. 36, pp. 18 and 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Breath of Life*, pp. 71–2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 36, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 40, pp.18–9.

minutes later. While everyone was bowed in prayer, a native Christian got up and began confessing some sin he had committed and ... it seemed as though a barrier of reserve had been rolled away. A wave of conviction swept through them all and for two and a half hours it continued, sometimes as many as three on their feet at once trying to speak ...<sup>15</sup>

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The revival at Gahini had now broken surface, and in the coming months the *abaka*, 'those on fire', as the revived Christians came to be known, became the cause of increasing dissension at Gahini.<sup>16</sup> Opposition to the revival intensified after the head of the Evangelists' Training School, Blasio Kigozi, gained a new experience of the power of the Spirit in May 1935, and began to preach on the themes of sin and repentance with a new urgency.<sup>17</sup>

In September 1935 Joe Church, Blasio Kigozi and Yosiya Kinuka led a convention at Kabale, the principal Ruanda Mission station in the Kigezi district of Uganda. As a result Kigezi was caught up in the revival.<sup>18</sup> The Synod of the Church of Uganda was due to meet at the end of January 1936. Blasio Kigozi, though only a deacon, prepared three points for the consideration of the Synod. He died of fever just before the Synod opened, but his three points were delivered posthumously before a hushed audience:

1. What is the cause of the coldness and deadness of the Uganda Church?
2. The communion service is being abused by those who are known to be living in sin and yet are allowed to partake. What should be done to remedy this weakness?
3. What must be done to bring revival to the Church of Uganda?

Blasio's answers had been:

That complacency in the leaders, together, with loss of urgency and vision in their teaching, were the causes of the coldness and deadness.

That revival could only come by the way of new birth, the coming of the Spirit, and the claiming of His power.<sup>19</sup>

In May 1936 ecstatic signs began to appear in the Gahini district. Conviction of sin began to be accompanied by dreams, visions, falling down in traces, weeping, shaking, and other phenomena of near hysteria.<sup>20</sup> Hymn-singing sessions went on all night. Revived Christians began to organize themselves into fellowship groups.<sup>21</sup> The revival was by now spreading far beyond p. 193 Gahini itself. In December 1936 it reached Burundi. The Synod in January 1936 had planned a series of missions in various parts of the diocese to commemorate the coming jubilee of the Ugandan Church.<sup>22</sup> Joe Church and a revival team from Gahini were due to lead three such missions, at Kako in Western Buganda, at Fort Portal in Toro, and at Hoima in Bunyoro. The Fort Portal mission was cancelled owing to the opposition of the resident missionary, but the other two missions took place and were

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 48, p.20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 49, pp.13-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 103-6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 55, pp. 35-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Breath of Life*, pp. 114-5.

<sup>20</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 120, 125-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> Max Warren, *Revival, An Enquiry* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 45.



the means of spreading the revival into these districts.<sup>23</sup> In April the Gahini team went on to lead a revival convention at Kabete in Kenya.<sup>24</sup> By mid-1937 the ripples of the movement were being felt through large areas of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, and were beginning to move northwards into Kenya. By late 1939 the impact of the Revival had extended further still: into Tanzania, southern Sudan and eastern Zaire, affecting missions of other denominations and nationalities. Over the next thirty years, revival teams and conventions spread the message of the Revival to other parts of Africa, and to other continents.

## THE PARADOX

We still await a full scholarly history of the Revival. The little which has been written tends to fall into one of two categories. Evangelical accounts have done little more than narrate the course of the Revival, and rest content with the explanation that it was the work of the Holy Spirit. African historians, sociologists and anthropologists, on the other hand, have begun to show some interest in the movement, but naturally enough interpret it almost exclusively in terms of categories drawn from African traditional religion and society. The Revival is seen as an expression of indigenous African protest against European missionary domination, a less developed form of the movement of religious and social dissidence which elsewhere in Africa has resulted in the rise of the so-called 'independent' churches. These writers have consequently tended to concentrate their attention on those unrepresentative sections of the Revival movement which show some approximation P. 194 to independent movements in other parts of Africa.<sup>25</sup> Whilst I would wish to retain both the insistence of popular evangelical accounts that the Revival was the work of the Holy Spirit, and the emphasis of the Africanists on the Revival as an outlet for independent African initiative, I intend to argue that a true understanding of the Revival is impossible without an adequate consideration of the European religious tradition from which it sprang.

The paradox which forms the theme of the remainder of this article is that of how a movement so deeply rooted in an alien religious tradition proved to be an ideal vehicle for the expression of indigenous initiative.

## THE ROLE OF 'KESWICK'

J. B. Webster in 1964 was the first historian to emphasize the important implications for African history of the new flood of missionary enthusiasm released by the Keswick convention, the first of which was held in 1875.<sup>26</sup> Although his contention that Keswick can be held responsible for the appearance of a new breed of racialistic and imperialistic missionaries is open to serious question, the influence of Keswick teaching on British evangelical missions during the next sixty years or more cannot be too strongly stressed. By the 1920s, 'Keswick' represented a clearly identifiable school among Anglican

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<sup>23</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 135–39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142–43.

<sup>25</sup> See in particular:

F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels* (London, 1961).

F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

D. B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>26</sup> J. B. Webster, *The African Churches among the Yoruba* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 43–4.

evangelicals in Britain. The Ruanda Mission originated in the aftermath of the controversy which resulted in the secession of a large number of conservative evangelicals from the CMS to form the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society. The Ruanda Mission was anxious to retain its ties with the CMS, but only on condition that its conservative doctrinal basis was safeguarded. From mid-1929 the Ruanda Mission magazine contained a doctrinal statement which included the assurance that the Mission was satisfied that it had received from the CMS 'full guarantees' to safeguard the future of the Mission 'on Bible, Protestant P. 195 and Keswick lines'.<sup>27</sup> The early personnel of the Mission were almost without exception products of the CICC, and men who had gained their theological schooling at Keswick. Keswick implanted in them a hunger for personal holiness, and an expectation of revival as a norm which Christians should constantly be seeking to realize. Joe Church's first prayer letters, sent from Brussels in 1926 and 1927 where he was studying tropical medicine, appealed to his prayer partners to pray that God 'will raise up from amongst these magnificent tribes of Ruanda-Urundi sanctified men, filled with the Holy Spirit, to blaze the trail throughout Central Africa' and that, 'if the Lord will tarry, this part of Africa may be a great centre for Evangelization and Revival.'<sup>28</sup>

It was thus with Keswick eyes that the missionaries of the Ruanda Mission contemplated the nominal state of Ugandan Christianity. Nominal Christians meant powerless and defeated Christian lives, and the sense of defeat rubbed off on missionaries who had been accustomed to regard a victorious Christian life as the norm.

The sense of failure was reinforced by the fact that the young churches of Kigezi and Rwanda appeared to be as much plagued by the problems of skin-deep Christianity as the second- and third-generation churches of Buganda. As Lawrence Barham put it in 1935: 'We were ashamed that a church so young should need reviving.'<sup>29</sup>

When revival came, its doctrinal teaching flowed down those Keswick channels which the Ruanda missionaries faithfully dug out of the African soil, and only occasionally, as we shall see, did the flood threaten to overflow its banks. The addresses at the first African convention held at Gahini in December 1933 closely followed the Keswick pattern,<sup>30</sup> and the innumerable revival conventions which followed departed very little from the original model.

## OTHER INFLUENCES

Two other aspects of the European tradition behind the Revival must also be mentioned. The first is the popularity in the 1920s P. 196 and 1930s of the Scofield Reference Bible within conservative evangelical circles on both sides of the Atlantic. Mention has already been made of the part the Scofield Bible played in the spiritual breakthrough achieved by Joe Church and Simeoni Nsibambi in 1929. Scofield's references also provided the structure for the daily Bible studies for the whole station at Gahini which Joe Church instituted in June 1929; studies which played an important role in preparing the ground for revival.<sup>31</sup> Most assessments of the influence of the Scofield

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<sup>27</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 28, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 17, p. 11 and No. 18, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 55, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 48, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 50.

Bible fasten on its dispensationalism<sup>32</sup> but, although expectation of the imminent return of Christ is a common enough theme in the correspondence of the Ruanda missionaries, there is little evidence of the full dispensationalist system being carried over into the East African context. Far more influential, in Joe Church's case at least, was Scofield's interpretation of Old Testament history as an intricate typological tapestry whose every detail pointed forward to the cross of Christ and to the spiritual experience of the Christian.<sup>33</sup> Some of the characteristic emphases of the Revival teaching are foreshadowed in Scofield's notes on topics such as the redemption from Egypt and the person of the Holy Spirit.

A further influence upon the Revival was that of Frank Buchman and the teaching which later acquired the label of 'Oxford Group'. Buchman was resident in Cambridge in 1920–1921 when Joe Church was an undergraduate, and exercised a considerable influence within the CICC. One of the features which became typical of his Cambridge meetings was the practice of public confession of sin.<sup>34</sup> There was also contact of a more direct nature in East Africa itself. During the 1930s, Oxford Group adherents held house parties for moral renewal in Kenya, and in 1936 they organized a house party at the Bishop's house in Kampala, which Joe Church attended. He was not, however, over-impressed.<sup>35</sup> By December 1939 Joe p. 197 Church was expressing concern at the damage being caused to the Revival by those who identified it with the Oxford Group:

I believe we have in the Ruanda Revival something better and deeper, but this calling it 'Groups' is not true, and it simply brings down a cloud of coldness, sorrow and suspicion.<sup>36</sup>

Oxford Group teaching appears to have been more influential among the expatriate than among the African population in East Africa. The closest the Revival came to a common front with the Oxford Group was in a mission to the European community in Kampala in August 1939. The team entitled the mission 'Spiritual Rearmament' in the hope of drawing in those on the non-Christian fringe of the moral re-armament movement.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Buchman's emphasis on the open sharing between Christians of the consciousness of sin and the experience of forgiveness was clearly a significant source of the teaching which became characteristic of the Revival.

## RADICAL IMPLICATIONS

The other side of the paradox which lies at the heart of the Revival is the prominence of African leadership and direction. The hesitant and anxious attitude towards the Revival of so many missionaries, including conservative evangelicals, was in part the product of their recognition that the movement had acquired its own impetus and had passed beyond their control. Missionaries who had for so long prayed for revival found, when it came, that Africans could after all live 'really changed lives', and the change was so radical

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<sup>32</sup> E.g. Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (University of Chicago, 1970), pp. 222–24.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Scofield's note on [Numbers 15:1](#).

<sup>34</sup> John Pollock, *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray, 1953), pp. 206–9.

Oliver Barclay, *Whatever happened to the Jesus Lane lot?* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 132.

<sup>36</sup> *Quest for the Highest* p. 180.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176a–176b.

as to turn on its head the relationship of spiritual superiority between missionary and African Christian which had hitherto been axiomatic. The paradox is resolved only when it is realized that the emphases deriving from the Keswick tradition themselves provided the key for Africans to seize the initiative in transforming a superficial brand of imported Christianity into an authentic African faith.

A theological tradition whose constant goal was holiness and victorious Christian living proved enormously attractive to African Christians who knew that beneath much of the appearance of so-called conversion lay an undiminished commitment to traditional p. 198 beliefs and practices. Doctrinal teaching which came close to advocating the necessity of a 'second blessing' seemed to offer the answer to those dissatisfied with the results of conversion. But once they had been revived, the emphasis on a second blessing was in practice obliterated by the new distinction between those in the revival fellowship—the *balokole* or 'saved ones'—and those outside. To be revived and to be saved became virtually synonymous. Writing in April 1937, Joe Church posed the question:

As one looks at these two or three hundred changed lives in Ruanda and Uganda what is one to say? Were they saved before, and were now just revived; or were they never really born again? Almost everyone of them would answer you himself that the latter was his experience. All seem to state unmistakably that they only had a nominal Christianity before.<sup>38</sup>

The division into the *balokole* and the rest provided the African Christian with a universally applicable spiritual standard of radical implications. Polarization within the Church was inevitable. Geoffrey Holmes, writing from Gahini in April 1939, lamented the division of the station into two camps:

Those who are in with the *abaka* ... and those who are not in with them. Actually here at Gahini most of the native Christians are in with this new group. There is no real fellowship between those who are in this group and those who are not. Those who are in it are continually seeking to convert those who are not to their way of thinking, and every means of persuasion and moral coercion are employed.<sup>39</sup>

Holmes had found himself on the wrong side of the fence. Geoffrey Holmes was a military man with an abrupt temper which the revived Africans were quick to censure.<sup>40</sup> Missionaries were disconcerted to find that Africans did not regard them as exempt from the need for revival. As Simeoni Nsibambi once told Joe Church with disarming simplicity:

Do you know, Dr. Joe, I can tell after I have shaken hands with a new missionary, whether he has got the real thing in his heart or not.<sup>41</sup> p. 199

For the missionaries it was a humbling experience, and not all succeeded in coming to terms with it. In Joe Church's words:

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> *Ruanda Notes*, No. 68, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 83–4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

We were beginning to see that we had come as missionaries to bring the light, but every now and again that light was turned round to shine on us.<sup>42</sup>

## PUBLIC CONFESSION

European holiness teaching thus proved to have democratic implications on the mission field. Accustomed to regard themselves as a spiritual aristocracy, many missionaries now found themselves excluded from the new spiritual aristocracy of the *balokole*. Furthermore, the Keswick emphasis on sin and repentance was capable of development in a direction which was remarkably congruent with the needs of the East African Christian. Evangelical orthodoxy has tended to lay great stress on the fact of sin and the necessity of repentance, but has found it difficult to provide a theologically acceptable institutional means of releasing the psychological tension thus created. The crucial display of African initiative in the Revival came in the Gahini convention of December 1933, when the prayer meeting was spontaneously transformed into a session of public confession, quite independently of any missionary influence. Thereafter, meetings for public testimony and confession became one of the most marked and most controversial features of the Revival. Many missionaries believed that the practice encouraged fraudulent confessions of non-existent sins, and deplored the making public of intimate personal details in testimony meetings. Most alarming of all was the use of public confession to implicate others. One of the revival leaders at Gahini, Ezra Kikonyogo, was in 1936 implicated by the confession of another and, although he repented publicly of the sin which had been exposed, he had to leave the station.<sup>43</sup> In April 1942 the Bishop of Uganda, Cyril Stuart, issued new rules of procedure in an attempt to regularize and control the practice of public confession, specifying:

1. No accusation against clergy or Church workers will normally even be considered unless brought by communicant members of the Anglican Church. p. 200
2. Public confession of shameful sins is not allowed.<sup>44</sup>

This feature of the Revival has, understandably, attracted the attention of the Africanists. D. J. Stenning, in a study of the impact of the Revival amongst the Bahima of North-Eastern Ankole, argued that the use of public confession as an institutional means of initiation into the Revival fellowship was a reflection of traditional religious practices. In traditional Bahima religion, the tutelary spirits were worshipped by local cult groups, entry into which was effected by an initiation ceremony where the initiate had to confess alleged infringements of sexual prohibitions. The initiate went through a ritual of being killed and being brought back to life before being accepted into the cult group. The parallelism in the Bahima case between Revival usage and traditional practice is certainly interesting, but it is far from proven that the prevalence of public confession in the Revival throughout East Africa can be explained in terms of the role of ritual confession in traditional religious practice. Missionary testimony is to the effect that in Rwanda, if not elsewhere, public confession was wholly unnatural to the African mind. Jim Brazier, for example, writing from Kigeme in December 1936, commented:

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<sup>42</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 84.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 195.

The heathen are disturbed by this new 'witchcraft', as they call it which makes people do what no self-respecting African does—to confess sins no one knew about!<sup>46</sup>

The parallels which public confession and the physical phenomena associated with the Revival suggested to the pagan African were not with traditional religion but with witchcraft.<sup>47</sup>

A more sophisticated interpretation of the social significance of public confession in the Revival is provided by F. B. Welbourn.<sup>48</sup> Drawing a distinction between, on the one hand, guilt-feelings 'as arising from knowledge of a prohibition touched or transgressed' and, on the other hand, shame-feelings as 'response to a goal not p.201 reached', he argues that traditional societies have no concept of subjective guilt and conceive of evil purely in terms of shame, of the failure of the individual to fulfil the role demanded of him by his position in society. A moral and subjective concept of guilt was the creation of the Puritan ethic in the Protestant West. Its emergence reflected 'the transition from a "tradition-directed" society motivated by the shame, to an "inner-directed" society motivated by guilt'.<sup>49</sup> The 'inner-directed' men of British imperial expansion were confronted by a traditional society in East Africa whose psychological roots they were incapable of understanding. Missionaries lamented the lack of sense of guilt among the Baganda, not fully realizing that most Baganda had become Christians in response to shame, in other words to indirect social pressure, and not to claim salvation from guilt. However, in order to advance themselves within the dominant inner-directed culture of the colonial power, the Baganda needed to adopt the modes of thought of a 'guilt-culture', and the Revival, so Welbourn argues, provided the ideal vehicle. In publicly confessing his sins, the African was repudiating the shame values of traditional society and identifying himself with the guilt-oriented culture of the West.

Welbourn's argument has major implications for missiology which cannot be dealt with here, and I suspect that not a few anthropologists would question the validity of his premises. Whilst I would resist any claim that the Revival can be explained in terms of African aspirations to appropriate the full goodies of colonial rule, I would suggest that public confession was an important means whereby the African Christian declared his severance from traditional society and his open commitment to the new society of the Revival fellowship. Keswick teaching on sin and repentance, when developed into an overt and institutionalized form in the practice of public confession, offered a spiritual release powerful enough to enable the African to make a clean break with pagan society.

## TRUE COMMUNITY

Evangelical Christianity in a missionary context has often faced the problem that while demanding of the individual a radical P.202 separation from his traditional society, it has offered him in return only a pale and diluted form of Christian community. In the East African context, however, the emphasis of the Keswick tradition on fellowship more than compensated for this tendency of evangelicalism to undervalue the corporate nature of

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<sup>46</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 132. See also the testimony of Joe Church in *Ruanda Notes*, No. 48, p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> See also *Quest for the Highest*, p. 129.

<sup>48</sup> F. B. Welbourn, 'Some Problems of African Christianity: Guilt and Shame' in C. G. Baeta (ed.) *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1968), pp. 182–94.

<sup>49</sup> 'Some Problems of African Christianity: Guilt and Shame', p. 186.



the Church. The Revival demanded an open repudiation of the pagan substratum which underlay so-called Christian society, but it also offered the prospect of incorporation into a fellowship group which fulfilled all the social functions of traditional kinship groups, and more besides. In many areas, the *balokole* moved out of their pagan settlements to form close-knit Christian communities under the authority of a recognized spiritual leader.<sup>50</sup> Within the fellowship group, clan and even tribal distinctions paled before the fundamental unity of the saved. In Rwanda itself, the strength of the Revival fellowship has been demonstrated by its ability to draw together Christians from the two bitterly opposed ethnic groups: the Tutsi, the traditional aristocratic minority from which most of the early converts were drawn; and the Hutu, their former serfs. In the Kigezi district of Uganda, this aspect of the Revival was noted by Joe Church as early as December 1936:

Fellowship is becoming one of the marked results of the blessing that we have had. Tribal distinctions are being swept away. Kabale is a different language area to Gahini. The Bakiga were once the sworn enemies of the tall Batutsi. .. but it seems that under the hand of God, that barrier has absolutely vanished.<sup>51</sup>

The Revival also made possible fellowship between missionaries and Africans on equal terms, a new working relationship which Joe Church describes as ‘the greatest fruit of the Revival’.<sup>52</sup> Some missionaries, however, were not prepared to accept the racial implications of fellowship on equal terms with the Africans. Among the American missionaries of the Africa Inland Mission the fear was expressed that the eventual result would be mixed marriages.<sup>53</sup> For the African Christian, on the other hand, the old Keswick motto of ‘All One in Christ Jesus’ found practical application in a [p. 203](#) fellowship which, in Max Warren’s words, was ‘an effective demonstration of the power of God to establish right human relationships’.<sup>54</sup> One Biblical text more than any other was central to the Revival:

.. if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.<sup>55</sup>

The forms of worship associated with the Keswick tradition also proved eminently suitable for development by African initiative until they became thoroughly indigenized. The hymns of the Keswick repertoire, many of them products of the 1859 revivals in Britain or of Moody and Sankey’s campaigns, captured the theme of the blood of Jesus in simple, repetitive verse. The *balokole* simply reinforced the element of repetition and syncopated the tunes. For example, the hymn ‘My hope is built on nothing less/ Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness’,<sup>56</sup> originally sung at Gahini in the 3/4 time of William Bradbury’s tune, was from July 1936:

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<sup>50</sup> J. V. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 102; and Stenning, *op. cit.*, pp. 272–73.

<sup>51</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 131.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157. The unfavourable attitude of the AIM towards the Revival is partly to be explained by the fact that their missionaries in the West Nile district of Uganda had the misfortune to meet up with one of the extremist groups thrown up on the fringe of the Revival, the ‘Trumpeters’.

<sup>54</sup> Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> [1 John 1:7](#) (Authorized Version).

<sup>56</sup> Not itself, of course, a Moody and Sankey hymn. It was written by Edward Mote c. 1834.



.. sometimes sung nearly all night, more and more syncopated until the Africanized six/eight time completely took the place of the original time.<sup>57</sup>

As the melodies became syncopated, drums were introduced into church services, and bodies began to sway to the music.<sup>58</sup>

It is possible also that the typological exegesis of the Scofield Bible proved peculiarly appropriate in the East African context. The recurrent theme of cleansing through the shedding of blood, emphasized by Scofield's chain-reference on the topic of sacrifice, must have made a ready appeal to a society long accustomed to various forms of ritual cleansing through blood sacrifice. The Revival brethren in Nyanza, Kenya, were known as the *Joremo*, 'the people of the blood'.<sup>59</sup> The treatment of the Exodus account of Israel's redemption from Egyptian slavery as a type of Christian salvation must have rung true to peoples for some of whom enslavement at the hands of neighbouring states was a comparatively p. 204 recent memory. The East African slave trade had reached its peak as late as 1873, and had continued well after that date; Buganda and Bunyoro had been among the sources of supply for one of its main routes.<sup>60</sup> Just as Scofield encouraged his Bible readers to visualize Christian experience in terms of pictures drawn from Old Testament history, so Joe Church's method of Bible teaching made extensive use of simple visual images of the process of surrender to Christ, presented by means of pin-man drawings on a blackboard. Such pictorial theology seems to have been ideally geared to the African way of thinking.

One final aspect of the 'European tradition' which again underwent further development by African initiative remains to be considered. The Ruanda missionaries were extreme low churchmen, with very little sympathy for any form of clericalism. In commencing work in Rwanda they were encroaching on Roman Catholic territory, and the continual awareness of the 'game of chess'<sup>61</sup> which they were carrying on with the Catholics influenced the Evangelicals to emphasize their distinctiveness by giving their innate anti-clerical tendencies freer rein than they might have been prepared to do in an English context. An important aspect of the process of 'disengagement' described by John Taylor, whereby the Ugandan Church had lost effective contact with the grass roots, had been the concentration of power in the hands of the clergy and a corresponding exclusion of the laity from responsibility.<sup>62</sup> The Revival, as Max Warren first pointed out,<sup>63</sup> was a re-assertion of the role of the laity within the church. The single spiritual standard of the *balokole* enabled the humble layman to place himself on a superior level to members of the clergy whom he regarded as unsaved, and in the revival teams laymen could preach on completely equal terms with clergy. Once again, however, this assertion of African initiative was no more than an extension of tendencies central to the missionary tradition itself. Within the Ruanda Mission the controversy between lay initiative and clerical authority first came to a head at a missionaries' convention held p. 205 on Lake Bunyoni

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<sup>57</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, pp. 126–27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> Welbourn and Ogot, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> E. A. Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade* (Nairobi: 1967), pp. 14 and 22.

<sup>61</sup> The metaphor was used by Joe Church in a prayer letter written in 1931. See *Ruanda Notes*, No. 38, p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> J. V. Taylor, *Processes of Growth in an African Church* (London: SCM Press, 1958), pp. 12–5.

<sup>63</sup> Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

in September 1933. The enthusiasm of the lay missionaries for lay teams came into conflict with the desire of the chairman of the Mission Council, the Rev. St. John Thorpe, to encourage the rapid diocesanization of the church. Thorpe therefore pressed, recalls Joe Church, 'for the rapid training and ordaining of African clergy (the very thing we feared)'.<sup>64</sup> That fear sprang, not from any aversion to the principle of giving Africans responsibility, but from a reluctance to allow the same educated priestly caste to emerge in Rwanda as had been created in Uganda.

## SURVIVING A CRISIS

As the Revival proceeded, the conflict between laity and clergy tended to align itself with the division within the CMS between conservative and liberal evangelicals. The conservatives of the Ruanda Mission, closely identified with the Revival, were opposed by the more liberal missionaries of the CMS in Uganda, who were increasingly anxious about the threat posed by the Revival to ecclesiastical order and discipline. In April 1941, Harold Guillebaud, the Archdeacon of Ruanda, died scarcely more than a year after the death of his predecessor, Arthur Pitt-Pitts. Joe Church, Lawrence Barham, and Godfrey Hindley began to wonder whether the sudden removal of two archdeacons was not a providential indication that the Ruanda Mission ought to hold more loosely to the traditional Anglican ecclesiastical system. A few days after Guillebaud's death, Lawrence Barham addressed a letter to the two others which summed up the tension between the impetus of the Revival and the constraints of the existing ecclesiastical structure:

I feel we do see that there is something wrong ... There is deeply ingrained in the rank and file of the church here a clerical pedestal which comes partly from Uganda, and partly from the system ... I said that ... God had given us another tragic warning, that we were on the wrong path ... I said I believed that we were not meant to leave the C of E ... but that God is calling us to run the mission on Fellowship lines, of a team of brothers, with Christ as the *Mukuru* (leader), fully surrendered, to be guided p. 206 by God, within the framework of the C of E ... I believe this to be the cross-roads for us at the moment, because it is the critical point between Totalitarianism and Democracy in the Ruanda Church—*Bukuru* (i.e. Autocracy) v. Fellowship.<sup>65</sup>

In the event, the potentially radical implications of such thinking were never realized. Lawrence Barham went on to become a bishop. Yet Joe Church, commenting on that letter from the perspective of 1971, could still write:

I must add that we have never lost that vision, but we have modified our way of attaining it. We feel now that everything depends on keeping the Fellowship really alive and burning within the visible church set-up, and then in time 'new life' will change things irresistibly.<sup>66</sup>

Nonetheless, the challenge the Revival posed to ecclesiastical authority precipitated a situation which by 1 December 1941 Bishop Stuart could describe as 'the greatest crisis in the history of the Church of Uganda'.<sup>67</sup> Relations between the Revival leaders and the Bishop were extremely tense over the next three years; yet the church survived the crisis, and the Revival remained within the Anglican communion. The independent action of lay

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<sup>64</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 87.

<sup>65</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 183.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

African leaders impatient with the constraints of church order and authority constituted the primary source of the danger of schism, yet it is clear that their action represented little more than the practical application of the thinking of the missionaries most involved in the Revival. If schism had taken place, its course would surely have demonstrated a much greater affinity to the Methodist secession from the Church of England in the 18th century than to the majority of the 'independent' secessions from mission churches which have occurred in 20th century Africa. The missionary leaders of the Revival interpreted the issues at stake during the crisis in terms of European ecclesiastical and theological categories. For them, the issues were fundamentally no different from those which had confronted them in their student days at Cambridge, when they had given their exclusive loyalty to the CICCUC, and Cyril Stuart and those like him had been closer in sympathy to the SCM (Student Christian Movement).<sup>68</sup> The congruence between European p. 207 tradition and African initiative which has been the theme of this article is perhaps summed up by the observation that the mission which had insisted, despite doctrinal differences, on remaining within the CMS should give birth to an African spiritual awakening which refused, despite the tensions it created in the ecclesiastical structure, to countenance the possibility of schism.

There were moments in the course of the Revival when the flood of African spiritual life did threaten to carve out wholly new channels beyond the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy. The instance which attracted the most adverse publicity was the conclusion of a handful of revivalists in Kampala in November 1939 'that some exposure of the body was a sign of victory over temptation'.<sup>69</sup> Yet even that excess could be said to be in the best, or rather the worst, tradition of European perfectionism. The East African Revival conforms in all essential respects to an European religious model. Yet it was the means of Africans expressing their dissatisfaction with a missionary religion which left them stranded half-way between pagan and Christian society. They expressed their dissatisfaction by seizing the initiative in a movement which fundamentally challenged missionary superiority. Both sides of the paradox could be true at once only because of the remarkable congruence between the characteristic features of the European model and the spiritual needs of the East African Church at this point in its history. To the Christian mind, the congruence is providential rather than accidental. Without the Revival, the Church in Kenya could scarcely have had the strength to survive Mau-Mau, and the Church in Uganda would not today be standing up to President Amin.

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**Brian Stanley is engaged on a PhD at Emmanuel College, concerning the home base of the early Victorian missionary movement. p. 208**

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<sup>68</sup> This point is well illustrated by a letter from Joe Church to Bishop Stuart, written at the height of the crisis in 1942, in which he promised the Bishop that he would never be party to any schismatic movement in the Church of Uganda, but went on to point out that the Ruanda Mission 'found it very difficult to be one with him in his insistence on trying to get the SCM and the CICCUC together on the same platform, as the message of Revival needs a very special call of God, based on the evangelical emphasis'. (*Quest for the Highest*, p. 197). Cyril Stuart was an undergraduate at Cambridge several years ahead of Joe Church and his contemporaries, but from 1921 to 1925 he was chaplain and lecturer at Ridley Hall, by now representative of the liberal evangelicalism which characterized the SCM (see Barclay, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–82).

<sup>69</sup> *Quest for the Highest*, p. 179.

# Survey of Recent Literature on Islam

by PENELOPE JOHNSTONE

IN RECENT years, the United Kingdom and other countries of Europe have seen the arrival of large numbers of Muslims, of varied national origins, seeking a temporary or permanent home. Islam is no longer an 'oriental' religion, somehow mysterious and distant, the province of comparative religion or travel specialists. Muslims are our neighbours: their religious obligations require a place of worship, ranging from purpose-built mosques to converted terrace houses, while their educational or dietary needs may call for sympathetic consideration on the part of the host communities.

Such an approach needs informed awareness of the presence, and of the beliefs, attitudes and practices, of the other faith. From the Christian churches have come publications giving information and guidance, while the Islamic communities themselves have produced a number of booklets aimed at the non-Muslim populations among whom they live.

One such booklet, recently published by the Islamic Foundation, sets out to explain briefly the basic principles and practices of Islam to the Western reader: M. M. Ahsan, *Islam: Faith and Practice*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, England (1976). A clear statement of this kind is to be welcomed, for from within a faith can come the most sincere expression of conviction and commitment. (The Foundation itself, a centre for mission in Britain, has produced other works including the series comprising *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, edited by K. Ahmad (1975).)

This booklet does, as it says, give the historical background and origins of Islam, and this is clear and concise; the acceptance of 'historicity' of legend is an integral part of such belief. (However, a Christian might well query the bland statement that in the case of 'earlier scriptures' the 'original texts were lost' (p. 11)— p. 209 with all the consequent assumptions about Christianity which this entails.) It does little more than add to the number of summary presentations of their faith by Muslims. These include *The Straight Path*, from the Islamic Council of Europe (1958) and *Islam*, Ward Lock (1970) in the series Living Religions. This last booklet is by Riadh el-Droubie, director of Minaret House, Croydon, England, which also produces wall-charts, posters and leaflets which can be of use in giving a colourful and lively presentation of Islam for school or parish.

The booklet by M. M. Ahsan is not so helpful when it strays further afield into the tricky area of population percentages. One would wish to question the relevance, at the very least, of his figures and map, the sources for which are emphatically not the most up-to-date or undisputed. Those who wish to pursue this question could find more reliable data elsewhere: others are best advised to pass them by.

M. Ahsan considers Islam to have been 'abused and misunderstood'; a sense of grievance when found among Muslims is very real and must be taken into account. But its justification is open to question particularly today; sheer lack of knowledge is more common than lack of goodwill. The knowledge gap has for a long while now been narrowed by Christian writers in the West who have striven to present Islam favourably. In an earlier generation there are the works of Gibb, Guillaume, Nicholson and Arberry—still reprinted today. More modern writers, combining scholarly insight with sympathetic involvement, include Watt, Cragg and Waardenburg. Watt's detailed works on the life of Muhammad, and his *What is Islam?*; Cragg's *Call of the Minaret* and *The House of Islam*, are notable contributions to interfaith understanding.

Muslims from both West and East, writing in English, have combined religious conviction with a facility of expression able to appeal to a Western Christian readership. Their works include F. Rahman's *Islam*, S. H. Nasr's books such as *Ideal and Realities of Islam*, M. Lings' *What is Sufism?*

Since Islam is a living religion, which in its contemporary manifestations is met with in everyday life, the Western Christian is sometimes understandably at a loss how to approach members of another faith; especially when that faith has taken root and is p. 210 flourishing in the soil of a 'Christian' country and moreover considers itself as the final and complete revelation of God's will to mankind. On interfaith questions the churches have responded, after an initial period of puzzled apprehension, with some detailed, informative and helpful booklets for the general Christian public.

The interest aroused by the 1976 World of Islam Festival led, among other results, to the formation of a special Committee of the British Council of Churches and the Conference of British Missionary Societies, on the Presence of Islam in Britain. Its Chairman, Bishop David Brown, has written an excellent booklet *A New Threshold* (1976): facts, guidance and points for discussion. The British Council of Churches' Community and Race Relations Unit, jointly with the Catholic Committee for Racial Justice, has published a small booklet *Islam*—first of a series on 'World Religions in Britain'.

The Church Missionary Society has a long history of involvement with Islam, originally abroad and now in this country; its publications include a film strip with commentary.

A detailed and attractively-presented book is J. B. Taylor's *Thinking About Islam*, Lutterworth (1971), especially useful for schools.

The United Kingdom has a rapidly expanding centre where religious questions of all kinds are dealt with, outside the denominational boundaries. This is the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham; its courses on Islam number Muslims as well as Christian among its students, and it is beginning documentation work for Christian-Muslim relations throughout Europe. Theses for the University of Birmingham's M.A. in Islamic Studies (Department of Theology) are supervised by the Study Centre. Its Advisory Committee of Christians and Muslims is drawn from Britain and Europe, and includes the Directors of both the Islamic Foundation and Minaret House, with whom it has been able to co-operate on a number of activities.

Many Muslim concerns come within the scope of education authorities, social workers, teachers or health visitors. The Community Relations Commission (CRC) includes Muslim members; it has an excellent series of leaflets and booklets on intercultural matter ranging from diet to burials, a *Directory of* p. 211 *Ethnic Minority Organizations*, and a detailed listing of educational facilities and opportunities for overseas persons. Its periodical *Education and Community Relations* frequently carries relevant articles, reprints of which can be obtained from the CRC.

Local ventures, though numerous, are largely unpublicized, but none the less valuable. One city, however, which has appeared in print is Bradford; the situation is summed up in E. Butterworth's *A Muslim Community in Britain*, published by the Church Information Office (1967). Bradford's own CRC has produced typescript reports of proceedings of discussions and interfaith conferences: 'Islam in the Parish', 1973; 'The Family in Islam and Christianity', 1974; 'Worship and Prayer in Islam and Christianity', 1975. CRC has published a discussion paper on 'The Education of Muslim Girls', emanating from the Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations.

The question of special Islamic education has been tackled by the Union of Muslim Organizations (UMO), with brief reports on 'Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education' and 'Islamic Education and Single Sex Schools' (1975).



Muslims' own attitudes and comments on a variety of issues are reflected in local, national or international periodicals. Produced in London, *Impact International* declares its aim as presenting 'Muslim viewpoint(s) on current affairs'; *The Muslim* comes from the Federation of Students' Islamic Societies (FOSIS); *The Muslim Woman*, in typescript, ranges from seasonal recipes to Qur'anic commentary, and reports activities of the Muslim Women's Association. Islamic books can be obtained through the Muslim Book Service.

Numerous local Muslim organizations may 'overlap' with national or cultural affiliations; most Universities have an Islamic Society, with FOSIS as their central body. In theory at any rate all these associations are included under the aegis of the UMO. The Islamic Council of Europe, based in London, organized in April 1976 an International Islamic Conference to coincide with the opening of the World of Islam Festival. This Conference was specifically aimed at presenting Islam as a living religion concerned with topics of today.

The international church organizations have been concerned with Islam and this is seen especially in the papers and reports p. 212 published by the World Council of Churches' section of Dialogue with Peoples of Living Faiths and ideologies (DFI). The *International Review of Mission*, October 1976, carried an edited report of the proceedings of a Consultation on Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wa, sponsored by IRM in June 1976. More recently, the publication, *Christians meeting Muslims*, traces ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue under WCC auspices.

The Catholic Church since Vatican II has given more serious thought to the non-Christian religions: within the Secretariat for non-Christians a special section for Islam considers relations with Muslims throughout the world. Members of the Secretariat have taken part in dialogue meetings, often in company with members of the WCC. The Secretariat has published a brief work *Guideline for a dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (1969, 2nd ed. 1971). In Rome the Pontifical Institute for Arabic Studies, apart from conducting excellent courses in Arabic and Islamic, publishes what is one of the best periodicals on the subject: *Islamochristiana* (annually, 1975, 1976 and 1977). The Conference of European Bishops of the Catholic Church, meeting in Vienna in 1977, gave its time to a discussion of Islam in Europe, with a consideration of the situation in specific countries.

Other European countries with large minorities often have to face serious issues of education, worship, social services, intermarriage. On the whole, individual churches and organizations have made their separate assessment and response. Booklets produced include, from Austria: *Moslems und Christen—Partner?* edited by M. Fitzgerald, A. Khoury, W. Wanzura, published by Styria, Graz (1976); from Germany, *Muslimen—unsere Nachbarn*, a collection of articles edited by G. Jasper, published by O. Lembeck, Frankfurt (1977); *Moslems unter uns*, by M. S. Abdullah and M. Mildemberger, Stuttgart (1974). The Evangelische Mission in Oberägypten Wiesbaden, has brought out a series *Christentum und Islam*, dealing briefly but at some depth with major points in Christian-Muslim dialogue: theological as well as practical, seen with sympathy but no compromise of the Christian standpoint.

The Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen, Stuttgart, concerned with the welfare of overseas and non-Christian persons, produces a small publication *Materialdienst*. Rather similar is *Orientdienst-Information*, a periodical from Wiesbaden. p. 213

For the Netherlands, the Nederlandse Zendingsraad, Amsterdam, has set out the basic facts in *Moslims en Christenen in Nederland*; in France, the Secrétariat pour les Relations

avec l'Islam (SRI) of the Catholic Church produces information on Muslims in Europe and a Newsletter.

For those wishing to broaden their geographical horizon, there are periodicals produced by the Christian Study Centre in Pakistan (*al-Mushir*) and the Henry Martyn Institute in India (the *Bulletin*). Both give reviews and articles reflecting the situation on the subcontinent, but of wider relevance. Muslim periodicals from that area include *The Criterion* and *Muslimnews International* (both from Karachi), *Islam and the Modern Age* (New Delhi).

Since 1911, the *Muslim World*, published in the United States, has considered historical and contemporary aspects of Christian-Muslim relations: its scholarly articles, reviews, editorials and news items are of lasting interest while they show the changing situation and developing attitudes of the past sixty years and more.

The historical background and implications can be explored with the help of bibliographies: very detailed in *Islamochristiana* 1 and 2, more summary in the section on Islam in the forthcoming *Middle East and Islam: A Bibliographical Introduction*, edited by D. Grimwood-Jones, to be published by Inter Documentation Company. Zug, Switzerland. Briefer bibliographies occur in some of the works mentioned above, such as *A New Threshold and Guidelines*.

All in all, it would not seem that 'wilful misunderstanding', which M. M. Ahsan so rightly deplores, is a main factor in Western attitudes. In the whole question of Christian-Muslim relations, if there is little cause for complacency, there can be a cautious optimism with a determination to avoid any mistakes or misunderstandings of the past. The current opportunities for learning about Islam, for meeting Muslims, can contribute to an atmosphere in which true understanding and friendship can become a reality. The spheres in which Christians and Muslims can, and must, work together for the future are becoming ever wider, to the benefit of all.

Some useful addresses:

Islamic Foundation, 223 London Road, Leicester, UK

Minaret House, 9 Leslie Park Road, Croydon, UK [p. 214](#)

Islamic Council of Europe, 24 Grosvenor Gardens, London S.W.1., UK

Muslim Women's Association, 12 Burlington Road, London, N. 10, UK

Muslim Book Service, 38 Mapesbury Road, London, N.W.2., UK

Federation of the Student Islamic Societies in the UK and Eire (same address)

Union of Muslim Organizations in UK and Eire, 30 Baker Street, London W1M 2DS, UK

News and Media Ltd., 33 Stroud Green Road, London N. 4 (*Impact International*), UK

*Islam and the Modern Age*: Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025, India

*The Criterion*: Islamic Research Academy, C-163/10, Mansoor, Karachi-3805, Pakistan

*Muslimnews International*: P.O. Box 7659, Zaib-un-Nisa St, Karachi-3, Pakistan

(In the next issue we will supplement this material by a survey from more conservative evangelical sources—Editor.)

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# Who are the Poor?

by DAVID C. JONES

ON TWO critical occasions in the gospels, Jesus interprets his mission in terms of bringing good news to the poor. At his inaugural sermon in Nazareth ([Luke 4:16–20](#)), and again in response to the question of the imprisoned Baptist ([Matthew 11:2–6](#), [Luke 7:18–23](#)), Jesus presents his ministry as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, particularly of [Isaiah 61:1](#), ‘He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor’. This much is clear; but precisely who are the poor and what is the good news that Jesus brings to them is not so simple. In keeping with the theme of Jesus as bearer of good news to the poor, the Beatitudes in both Matthew and Luke begin with a blessing upon them. Yet who has not puzzled over how it is that Matthew has: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’, while Luke has simply: ‘Blessed are the poor’, and a little later: ‘Woe to you who are rich’ ([Matthew 5:3](#), [Luke 6:20, 24](#)). Are the poor spiritual beggars ‘those who feel their spiritual need’ (Goodspeed’s translation of [Matthew 5:3](#)), or are they the socially and economically oppressed?

There is significant exegetical tradition that minimizes the idea that the poor in view in Jesus’ preaching are a socio-economic group. Matthew is characteristically appealed to for the definitive interpretation of Luke. To cite an example: ‘The elaborations of Matthew—“poor in spirit”, “hunger for righteousness”—make explicit that a religious and not an economic status is primarily in view.’<sup>1</sup> An article in *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, argues that ‘the poor’ takes on a non-economic meaning in the period before Christ and is equivalent to ‘the faithful’. Thus, it is to the ‘spiritually loyal’ that Christ promises the Kingdom in the Beatitudes. ‘Indeed, where “poor” occurs in the gospels in the absence of an obvious or implicit economic connotation it should be interpreted in terms of spiritual fidelity.’<sup>2</sup> A p.216 fairly recent article in a prominent evangelical journal on ‘The Widow, the Orphan, and the Poor in Old Testament and Extra-Biblical Literature’ concludes with an appeal for the Christian ‘to remember that there is still a lost mankind which stands, spiritually speaking, widowed, orphaned, and destitute of the family of God.’<sup>3</sup> The one ethical responsibility derived from his study is *evangelism*; the pervasive Old Testament concern of God for the widow, the orphan, and the poor is thought of only in terms of its symbolic value.

The assumption that economic connotations are not very obvious when the poor are mentioned in the gospels is widely challenged in contemporary theology. James Cone is a good example of Liberation Theology in which this challenge is most insistent.

Because most Biblical scholars are the descendants of the advantaged class, it is to be expected that they would minimize Jesus’ gospel of liberation for the poor by interpreting poverty as a spiritual condition unrelated to social and political phenomena. But a careful reading Of the New Testament shows that the poor of whom Jesus spoke were not primarily (if at all) those who are spiritually poor as suggested in [Matthew 5:3](#). Rather, as the Lucan tradition shows, these people are ‘those who are really poor, .. those who are

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<sup>1</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Nelson, 1966), pp. 113–14.

<sup>2</sup> R. K. Harrison, ‘Poor’, *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Canon, 1973), p. 516.

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Patterson, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 130 (July–September, 1973), p. 233.

really hungry, who really weep and are persecuted'. The poor are the oppressed and the afflicted, those who cannot defend themselves against the powerful.<sup>4</sup>

Cone feels 'it is important to point out that Jesus does not promise to include the poor in the Kingdom *along with* others who may be rich and learned. His promise is that the Kingdom belongs to the poor alone.'<sup>5</sup> The light of the poor against poverty and injustice 'is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ.'<sup>6</sup> The Kingdom of God is for the socially oppressed exclusively and inclusively. That is, it is given to the poor alone, and it is given to all the poor as such. [Matthew 5:3](#), which presents [p. 217](#) a challenge to both these assumptions, is dismissed rather handily.

Such are the conflicting interpretations of the gospel of the poor. Do they simply reflect the social-class bias of the interpreter? That baleful possibility should certainly put us on guard in approaching the Biblical teaching concerning the poor. I propose to begin with an analysis of the Old Testament vocabulary, since it is important, as a contemporary theologian notes in this regard, to avoid 'the imposition of one language on another'.<sup>7</sup> The next step will be to examine the references to the poor in Isaiah since this is the Scripture directly appealed to by Jesus for the delineation of his mission as the Messiah. Finally, attention will be given to the poor in the New Testament as the Messianic community takes shape after Jesus' death and resurrection.

## I. OLD TESTAMENT WORDS FOR THE POOR

The basic meaning of the English word *poor* is 'lacking material possessions'. The Hebrew Old Testament uses five main terms for those lacking material possessions, all at one time or another translated 'poor' in the King James and other English versions. Closest to the English term with its connotations of *lack* is *ras*.<sup>8</sup> Use of this term is almost totally confined to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, but there is a memorable instance in Nathan's parable of the poor man who had nothing but one little ewe lamb which was seized by a rich man having a great many flocks and herds ([2 Samuel 12:1-4](#)).<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew word *dal* is more evenly distributed throughout the Old Testament, and is quite consistently translated 'poor' in the King James Version. In distinction from *ras*, *dal* connotes the weak social position of those who lack. [Proverbs 28:3](#) even presents us with the anomaly of 'A poor man (*ras*) who oppresses the poor (*dallim*)'. A third term, '*ebyon*', also evenly distributed throughout the Old Testament, describes the [P. 218](#) poor from the point of

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<sup>4</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Seabury, 1975), pp. 78-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>7</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Orbis Books, 1973), p. 289.

<sup>8</sup> As to form, *ras* is the *qal* ptcp. of *rus*, of which the only instance in the *qal* perf is [Psalm 34:10](#)(11), 'The young lions *do lack* and suffer hunger'.

<sup>9</sup> The only other instances of *ras* outside Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are [Psalm 82:3](#), to be discussed below, and Samuel [18:23](#) where David, when offered King Saul's daughter in marriage, refers to himself as 'a *poor* man and lightly esteemed'.

view of *want* or *need*.<sup>10</sup> The poor are needy persons whose desires for ‘a competent portion of the good things of this life’<sup>11</sup> are frustrated.

The remaining terms to be considered in the basic Old Testament vocabulary for the materially poor are the closely related *'ani* and *'anaw*. Though the singular of the latter is not actually used in the Old Testament in this sense,<sup>12</sup> the plural (*'anawim*) is in such passages as [Job 24:4](#), [Psalm 10:12](#), [17](#), [Amos 2:7](#). Both terms connote *oppression*, and designate the poor as wrongfully impoverished by the rich and powerful. The prophets in particular inveigh against every form of oppression by which people are made and kept poor: dishonest business ([Amos 8:5–6](#)), exorbitant interest ([Habakkuk 2:6](#)), seizure of land ([Micah 2:1–2](#)), nonpayment of wages ([Jeremiah 22:13–17](#)), manipulation of justice ([Isaiah 5:23](#)), deceit and violence on the part of the rich ([Micah 6:12](#)).<sup>13</sup> Such references, of course, could be multiplied many times. These are sufficient to establish the prophetic perspective on the poor as an oppressed socio-economic group.

Taken together, the Old Testament words for the poor paint a picture of a destitute, needy, helpless and oppressed people. The basic vocabulary happens to come together in one text, [Psalm 82:3–4](#). Evangelicals are familiar with the fact that human rulers, those to whom the word of God came, are here addressed as ‘gods’, since Jesus appeals to [Psalm 82:1](#) in an important argument where he explicitly affirms that ‘the Scripture cannot be broken’ ([John 10:35](#)). What God says to the ‘gods’ ought to be equally familiar:

How long will you judge unjustly  
And show partiality to the wicked?  
Vindicate the weak and fatherless;  
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. p. 219  
Rescue the weak and needy;  
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

([Psalm 82:2–4](#), NASB)

As in the Revised Standard Version of verses [3b](#) and [4a](#), ‘afflicted and destitute’ represents *'ani waras*, while ‘weak and needy’ translates *dal we 'ebyon*. Those whom the rulers are to protect in the name of God are vividly portrayed through the different words for the poor. What is more important, the imperative of justice for the poor is grounded in the fact that they are the special objects of the Lord’s own concern (e.g. [Psalm 146:7–9](#)).

## II. THE METAPHORICAL USE OF POOR-WORDS

The possibility that Old Testament words for the poor may also be used in a non-literal sense complicates the issue. Simply to raise the question in the current theological climate is to invite charges of class-bias since the idea is associated with an exegesis that is often blind to the Biblical teaching about God’s concern for the literally poor. Still, the possibility does exist as a common feature of language, and ought not to be dismissed out of hand. it

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, [Exodus 23:6](#), [Deuteronomy 15:4–11](#), [I Samuel 2:8](#), [Job 24:4](#), [Proverbs 31:9](#). *'ebyon* is quite frequent in the Psalms, and there is significant use in Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

<sup>11</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, in answer to Question 104: ‘What do we pray for in the fourth petition?’

<sup>12</sup> The only instance of *'anaw* in the singular is at [Numbers 12:3](#) where Moses is described as the ‘poorest’ of men: ‘Now the man Moses was *'anaw me'od* above all mankind on the face of the earth.’

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gutierrez, p. 293.

is not *a priori* impossible that the same term might be used to designate both a sociological situation and an attitude of mind.<sup>14</sup>

Such does appear to be the case with *'ani* and *'anaw*. Both terms, and particularly the latter, are used to denote inward distress as well as outward oppression, especially distress over one's own sinfulness. The person who is 'poor in spirit' is one who has been humbled by God and is consequently humble before God. As the Lord says in [Isaiah 66:2](#): 'To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit (*'ani unecen ruah*), and who trembles at my word.' Surely it is in this sense of bowing before the word of God that Moses is said to be the 'poorest' (*'anaw*) of men ([Numbers 12:3](#)),<sup>15</sup> that 'poverty' (*'anawah*) is to be sought after ([Zephaniah 2:3](#)), and that the Messianic king is declared to be 'poor' (*'ani*, [Zechariah 9:9](#)). Indeed, it is hard to tell whether this use of *'ani* and *'anaw* should be regarded as metaphorical or [p. 220](#) simply as a distinct meaning stemming from the same root idea.<sup>16</sup>

Outward oppression and inward distress are often found together, as in [Psalm 25](#). David begins this psalm with an assertion of his trust in the Lord and a plea that his enemies not be allowed to triumph over him (vv. [1-3](#)). He is at the same time very mindful of his sinfulness and need for pardon (vv. [7, 11](#)). Describing himself as *'ani* (v. [16](#)), in the same breath he prays for deliverance and for forgiveness (vv. [18-19](#)). Thus, the Lord leads the *'anawim* in justice (v. [9](#)), and this includes deliverance from oppression, but the *'anawim* are not simply the oppressed—they are sinners who are taught the way of the Lord (vv. [8b, 9b](#)), who keep his covenant (v. [10](#)), who wait on the Lord (v. [21](#)).

A careful reading of [Psalm 37](#) leads to the same conclusion. This psalm also is concerned with the deliverance of the oppressed from the evil-doing of the wicked (vv. [12-15, 39-40](#)). As a result of the promised intervention of the Lord, the *'anawim* will inherit the land (v. [11](#)). The inheritance of the land is a recurring phrase in the psalm, and its variations provide us with a more complete description of the *'anawim*. They are the righteous (v. [29](#)) who are blessed by the Lord (v. [22](#)), and who wait for him and keep his

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Albert Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh*, trans. Kathryn Sullivan (Liturgical Press, 1964), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Though Luther, perhaps reflecting his own experience as a religious leader, sees Moses as *geplagter*, 'oppressed'.

<sup>16</sup> The Septuagint uses four main terms in translating both *'ani* and *'anaw*: *ptochos* and *penes*, on the one hand, and *praus* and *tapeinos*, on the other. The relative frequency is as follows:

	<i>'ani</i>	<i>'anaw</i>
<i>ptochos</i>	39	3
<i>penes</i>	14	5
<i>praus</i>	4	9
<i>tapeinos</i>	10	3

It seems clear from the linguistic data that when Jesus referred to himself as *praus kai tapeinos te kardia* ([Mathew 11:29](#)) this was equivalent to *'ani* as used in [Zechariah 9:9](#) which the Septuagint translated *praus*. See also [Proverbs 3:34](#) (*'ani/tapeinos*), cited in the NT at James 4.6 and [1 Peter 5:5](#).

way (vv. 9, 34). Thus, the promise is not simply to the oppressed as such, but to the oppressed as taking refuge in the Lord and walking in his ways.

### III. THE POOR IN ISAIAH

To return to the key text cited by Jesus its Scriptural authority for his Messianic work, [Isaiah 61:1](#) reads as follows: ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to bring [p. 221](#) good news to the poor (*’anawim*).’<sup>17</sup> The question is: What is the meaning of *’anawim* in the context of Isaianic prophecy?

The Book of Isaiah opens with a scathing indictment of Judah and Jerusalem for their sin against the Lord. Prominent in the call to repentance is the demand for justice, epitomized in the defence of the orphan and widow against the ruthless.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean:  
Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight.  
Cease to do evil,  
Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Reprove the ruthless:  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.

[\(Isaiah 1:16–17\)](#)

Particularly does the Lord press his case against the rulers of the people ([Isaiah 1:23](#)). They were established to govern the Lord’s people righteously, to see that justice was maintained. Instead, they have become a prime source of injustice.

Woe to those who enact evil statutes,  
And to those who constantly record unjust decision,  
So as to deprive the needy (*dallim*) of justice,  
And rob the poor (*aniyye*) of my people of their rights,  
In order that widows may be their spoil,  
And that they may plunder the orphan.

[\(Isaiah 10:1–2\)](#)

In striking contrast to the corrupt rulers of Isaiah’s day emerges the promised shoot from the stem of Jesse ([Isaiah 11:1ff](#)). As in the prophecy of [Isaiah 61](#), the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him (v. 2), and he with righteousness will judge the poor (*dallim*), and decide with fairness for the oppressed (*’anawim*) of the earth (v. 4). In light of the overriding concern for social justice in the first ten chapters, with Ned B. Stonehouse, ‘We must certainly avoid the extreme of supposing that Isaiah’s contemplation of the poor disregards the social conditions of his time and has in view only the spiritual state of Israel.’<sup>18</sup> The Messianic age is an age of justice for the oppressed. [p. 222](#)

And on that day the deaf shall hear words of a book,  
And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the  
blind shall see.  
The afflicted (*’anawim*) also shall increase their

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<sup>17</sup> The Septuagint has *ptochois*; as do Matthew and Luke in the quotation of [Isaiah 61:1](#).

<sup>18</sup> Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Luke to Christ* (Eerdmans, 1951), p. 80.

gladness in the Lord,  
And the needy ('ebyon) of mankind shall rejoice  
in the Holy One of Israel.

([Isaiah 29:18-19](#))

The mention of the blind and deaf along with the poor and oppressed introduces a theme that is central to the ministry and prophecy of Isaiah and which highlights the distinctiveness of his gospel of liberation. For Isaiah's commission (in response to his enthusiastic 'Here am I, send me!') was, in effect, in his own day, to confirm a blind and deaf people in their hardness of heart ([Isaiah 6:9-10](#)). The desolation which was to overtake the land was from the Lord, being his judgement against 'a godless nation, the people of my fury' ([Isaiah 10:6](#)). The oppressive nation becomes the oppressed, and that not simply by other nations, but—and the point is crucial—by the Lord ([Isaiah 42:24-25](#)).

The lesson is lost on the blind and deaf servant ([Isaiah 42:18-20](#)). But the Lord promises a day when 'the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped' ([Isaiah 35:5-6](#)).

Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, he your teacher will no longer hide himself, but your eyes will behold your teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left. ([Isaiah 30:20-21](#)).

The eye opening, heart-changing salvation proclaimed by Isaiah brings relief to the oppressed and comfort to the afflicted, the same act of deliverance bearing both aspects as God judges the enemies of his people who nevertheless were the rod of his anger. The Exile as the chastening affliction of the Lord is glossed over in contemporary theologies of liberation, the Exodus being characteristically appealed to as the 'paradigm' of God's liberating activity.<sup>19</sup> But such an interpretation of the Exile is the very presupposition of Isaiah's message of comfort, broached in [Isaiah 12:1-2](#). p. 223

The theme of comfort is particularly developed in chs. 40-66 which look beyond the Babylonian exile to a renewed and restored people. The opening enunciation of comfort explicitly brings into view the background of sin and affliction.

Comfort, O comfort my people, says our God.  
Speak kindly to Jerusalem;  
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,  
That her iniquity has been removed,  
That she has received of the Lord's hand  
Double for all her sins.

([Isaiah 40:1-2](#))

The comfort in view is the Lord's compassion on his afflicted ('aniyyan, [49:13](#)), whom he forsook for a brief time in his anger, but now gathers with everlasting loving kindness ([57:7-8](#)), offering forgiveness to penitent sinners who, hungry and thirsty, return to the Lord ([55:7](#)). The thirsty ones to whom the great invitation of [Isaiah 55:1](#) is made '(Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters)', are, significantly for our purposes, called 'aniyyim and 'ebyon in [41:17](#) ('The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst'). The basis on which the offer of forgiveness is

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. John H. Yoder 'Exodus and Exile: The Two Faces of Liberation', *Cross Currents* 23 (Fall 1973), pp. 297-309. Yoder criticizes the selective and exclusive use of the Exodus as a model of liberation.



made, and on which transgressions are wiped out and sins remembered no more ([43:25, 44:22](#)) is the atonement provided by the suffering Servant of [Isaiah 53](#).

He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon him,  
And by his scourging we are healed.

([Isaiah 53:5](#))

Although the poor and weak may be in the right over against the rich and powerful, nevertheless the need for atonement is universal according to the terms of the next verse in context.

All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on him.

([Isaiah 53:6](#); cf. [64:6-7](#))

In light of this, a particular attitude of heart is requisite for fellowship with the Eternal and Most High God whose name is Holy. He dwells with the 'contrite and lowly of spirit' ([Isaiah 57:15](#)), and looks 'to him who is humble ('*ani*) and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word' ([Isaiah 66:2](#)). Just as the [p. 224](#) misery of social oppression loomed so large in the early chapters of Isaiah and had a decisive bearing on the interpretation of the poor in [11:4](#), so the consciousness of sin and need of forgiveness that runs as a thread through the latter chapters must bear on our understanding of the poor in [61:1](#). As oppression by man could not be excluded from the former passage, so humility before God cannot be excluded here.

It is perhaps well to recall here that, in the precise words of the Shorter Catechism, 'The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery' (Q. 17). As the Redeemer of God's elect, Christ's work is to bring them out of the estate of sin and misery into the estate of salvation. The Messianic salvation is a deliverance from both sin and misery. In its proclamation in the book of Isaiah and elsewhere in the Bible, one or the other aspects of our fallen estate may be conspicuous, just as the consciousness of need varies according to individual circumstances, but the Gospel is always liberation from sin *and* misery.

#### IV. THE POOR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As will be readily discovered, this section, despite its heading will not deal with the poor in the New Testament in any thorough way. What follows are some observations on the use of *ptochos*, the predominant term for the poor in the New Testament,<sup>20</sup> which use is both literal and figurative and bears out the conclusion of the preceding section that 'the poor' in Biblical thought has 'both a religious and an economic connotation.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Penes* only occurs once ([II Corinthians 9:9](#), a quotation from the Septuagint). The 34 instances of *ptochos* are translated in the KJV as follows: 'poor' (31), 'beggar' (twice [Luke 16:20, 22](#)), beggarly (once, [Galatians 4:9](#)). To truly present '*ani* and '*anaw*, *praus* (3) and *tapeinos* (8) should be included. Edwin Hatch discusses the four terms in his *Essays in Biblical Greek* (Oxford, 1889), pp. 73-7. Martin Franzmann effectively argues that *ptochos* in the NT, particularly when used in a figurative sense, retains something of its original sense of 'beggar', a sense which clearly distinguishes the term in classical Greek. His 'Beggars Before God', *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 18 (December, 1947), pp. 889-98, brims with exegetical insight.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age* (Clayton Publishing House, 1972), p. 81.

The question before us is: In what sense is the New Testament Messianic community or assembly identified as ‘the poor’? A convenient way into this question is to examine two of the Lord’s [p. 225](#) messages to churches in Asia recorded in the opening chapters of the Apocalypse.

The church at Smyrna ([Revelation 2:8–11](#)) was literally poor and oppressed. ‘I know your afflictions and your poverty (*ptocheia*)<sup>22</sup>—yet you are rich!’ Jesus encourages this suffering church, whom he has already made ‘rich’,<sup>23</sup> by promising, not immediate deliverance, but rather the crown of life to those who remain faithful, even to the point of death, and in this way emerge triumphant.

The church at Laodicea ([Revelation 3:14–21](#)), on the other hand, was apparently well-off and at ease. At least, they claimed to be rich and to need nothing. The Lord’s analysis of the situation was quite the opposite: ‘You do not realize that you are wretched pitiful, poor, blind and naked.’<sup>24</sup> In terms reminiscent of Isaiah, the Lord invites the materially rich but spiritually lukewarm Laodiceans to come to him for what they truly need. Surely in this call to repentance (v. [19](#)) and invitation to fellowship (v. [20](#)) it may be said that the Gospel is preaching to ‘the poor’.

Yet there are other passages that prevent us from conceiving of the matter simply in such terms. There is, for example, the remarkable passage in James where the literally poor are declared to be the special objects of divine favor: ‘Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him?’ ([James 2:5](#)).<sup>25</sup> Calvin comments:

Not only the poor, but he determined to start with them, in order to rebut the arrogance of the rich ... God shed his grace on the rich and poor alike, but chose to prefer the latter to the former, that the great ones might learn not to live on self. appreciation, and that the humble and obscure might ascribe all that they were to the mercy of God: thus both would be trained to have a proper and sober-minded attitude.<sup>26</sup> [p. 226](#)

Calvin’s ‘not only the poor’ is supported by [James 1:9–10](#) (to go no further than this epistle), where both the poor brother and the rich brother are addressed in terms appropriate to each, indicating that the good news is for the poor in spirit, whatever outward circumstances may be. Yet [James 2:5](#), particularly when read along with the denunciation of the rich in [5:1–6](#), indicates that the good news is pre-eminently for the socio-economically oppressed, not because poverty is a means of grace, but because God who delivers from sin and misery so chooses to manifest his mercy and justice.

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<sup>22</sup> There are two other instances of *ptocheia*, [II Corinthians 8:2, 9](#).

<sup>23</sup> The present tense, *alla plousios ei*, should not pass unnoticed.

<sup>24</sup> The personal pronoun and definite article in Greek make the assertion particularly emphatic.

<sup>25</sup> The NIV reflects the dative, *to kosmo*. James combines the act of poverty with its worldly estimation: those who lack are despised. This is parallel to Paul’s point in [I Corinthians 1:26–31](#).

<sup>26</sup> Commentary on the Epistle of James, *in loc*.

# Responses

## *Two responses to Professor Jones' article*

(a) by JAMES W. SKILLEN

THE brief survey of the Old Testament's picture of 'the poor' as David Jones presents it, is very helpful. It should be sufficient to overcome the two distorted interpretations that he characterizes at the beginning of his paper. The conclusion of the paper is slightly disappointing, however, because even though he indicates that the New Testament continues the complexity of Old Testament usages, he does not adequately pull the pieces together in a way that gives us a clear understanding of the New Testament teaching. His concluding paragraph following the quote from Calvin needs further elaboration.

The problem is not simply that the two Testaments use the word 'poor' in both a 'literal' and a 'figurative' sense, with both an 'economic' and a 'religious' connotation. The socio-economic conditions of the poor and the rich appear to be related to the condition of mankind before the face of God in a way that does not leave two usages simply dangling side by side.

On the one hand the 'poverty' of spirit which God requires of the proud and haughty, or which he seeks to bring about by means of the chastisement and affliction which he himself administers, or which he applauds when he finds it present in the heart ([Isaiah 42: 66:2; Psalm 37; Matthew 5:3; Revelation 3:19](#)), is a 'poverty' that clearly reflects and leads to further humility, openness toward God, love of neighbor, and non-selfishness. In this sense 'poverty' does not merely have a 'religious connotation', but rather it suggests an attitude of heart that is part of a way of life—a life of deeds, including economic deeds, of justice, mercy, and love. God's chastening of his people by means of exile ([Isaiah 30:20–21: 42:24–25](#)) was not merely to give them 'poor hearts' but hearts that [p. 228](#) would lead them to 'walk in his ways' and to 'obey his law'. Poverty in this sense is not 'figurative' in contrast to 'literal' poverty, but is a 'way of life' that would necessarily express itself in deeds of economic justice so that none would be 'poor'.

On the other hand, it seems clear from the passages which Jones cites, that conditions of economic privation and oppression are judged by God to be unjust and improper, manifesting the hard hearts, selfish attitudes, and unjust social structures of those who are responsible for such poverty and oppression ([Psalm 82:3–4; Isaiah 1:16–20 ; James 5:1–6](#)). Thus the problem here is not simply that some kind of literal poverty exists as compared with 'non-literal' poverty, or that an economic condition which is not 'religious' comes into focus. Rather, poverty, hunger, and oppression are wrong in God's sight because his creatures were created to be recipients of his rich blessings; they were created to enjoy fullness of life in this world. If some do not have enough to eat, or if they have no place to lay their heads at night, then this situation calls for: (1) patience and humility (poorness of spirit) on the part of the poor ([Psalm 37:7, 16–17](#)); (2) radical repentance on the part of the rich whose deeds are partly or totally responsible for the hunger and oppression of the poor ([Amos 5; Isaiah 55:7](#)); and (3) the establishment of new cultural patterns and social structures that will allow everyone to be 'rich' in the enjoyment of God's blessings while being humble ('poor') before the face of God ([Isaiah 1:16–17](#)).

If this is what the Scriptures teach, then we can say that they actually reveal quite different meanings of wealth and poverty; they do not simply make references of a 'literal' and 'non-literal' character by means of the same terms. 'Poverty' is a reference to the condition of not being free to enjoy God's earthly blessings: a tragedy that ought not to

exist. God is always on the side of the poor in this case and against the rich who are responsible for the poverty of others. The rich and the oppressors are wrong and they stand under judgement. That is why they (the rich) are truly poverty-stricken, 'wretched, poor, blind and naked' ([Revelation 3:14-21](#)), in the sense that their lives are not 'right with God'. In this sense the rich are really poor, not honorably 'poor in spirit', but rather 'poor' in that God will spit them out of his mouth.

Being rich in the enjoyment of God's blessings, or *shalom*, on [p. 229](#) the other hand, is a proper way of life for God's creatures—all of whom should be enjoying his blessings. In this sense those who are 'right with God' are rich ([Revelation 2:9](#)), not just in a non-literal sense, but in the deepest sense of present condition as well as eschatological anticipation ([Psalm 37:3-4](#), [9](#), [16](#); [Matthew 5:3](#)). However, if there are rich people who are rich in the possession of certain things (money, land, food, etc.) as a result of selfishness or oppression that makes or keeps others poor, then they are actually living deformed, unjust lives that reveal their real poverty before God.

My conclusion from Jones' study, in other words, is that 'poverty of spirit' in the healthy sense is not a figurative use of the word 'poor' that also has a literal economic sense, but rather is a use of the term 'poor' that goes hand in hand with *shalom*, wealth, righteousness, justice, and richness before God. Such 'richness before God' (or humility of spirit) works its way out in blessing for everyone, including the end of 'poverty'. On the other hand, 'poverty' in the sense of oppression, hunger, and the lack of freedom to enjoy God's blessings goes hand in hand with those unjust and anti-normative attitudes and institutions of the rich and the oppressors whom God always stands against in judgment. This kind of poverty flows from the works of those who are truly wretched before God ('poor' in the sense of [Revelation 3:14-21](#)), and the tragedy of it is that even those who are 'right with God' might suffer much unjust poverty in this world because of the sinfulness of the rich.

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## (b) *by* HARVIE M. CONN

???IN REACTION to what I increasingly see to be the world Reformed community's 'hidden theological curriculum', I decry the methodology we mistakenly call 'theology' which starts with [p. 230](#) abstracted word studies and not what Jose Miguez-Bonino called 'that concrete reality in which we find ourselves'. I do not ask simply that our theology be concrete, what Francis Schaeffer might call the practice of the truth. I argue that if theology is to be theology, and not an abstracted, theoretical process of conceptualizing propositions concerning God, it begins, not abstractly with the Bible, but with the Bible in confrontation against trampled human dignity, against the plunder of a vast majority of people. It cannot simply ask: 'Who are the poor?' That is abstraction. It can only begin with the realities provided by the September 15, 1975 issue of *Newsweek*, the subsistence of 900 million persons on less than \$75 a year, while the gross national product per capita in the United States reaches \$5,590 in 1972, the Netherlands \$2,840.

Theology begins with the reality of dividing up the world into a rich one-third and a poor two-thirds, the rich claiming 87% of the world's total GNP each year, the poor two-thirds left with 13%! A theology of the poor begins with the words of Racema da Silva, resident of a Brazilian slum. 'Sometimes I think,' he writes, "If I die, I won't have to see my children suffering as they are." Sometimes I even think of killing myself. So often I see them crying, hungry; and there I am, without a cent to buy them some bread' (Ronald

Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1977, p. 31). Liberation theologians call this *praxis*, the Marxist abhorrence of ideology, the action/reflection call to economic, social self-realization in making (or changing) history, in work. on which theology is to reflect critically and creatively. I deplore what I feel to be the Renaissance view of man on which that concept of *praxis* is built by Marxism's dialectical materialism. But I recognize slowly that my own dimensions of theologizing are too often constructed from white, middle class *status quo* systems created by capitalism and not by Christianity as 'the third way'. And I see dimly and grudgingly that until these 'humanist' presuppositions are challenged also by the painful reality of poverty *in concreto, et in Scriptura*, I cannot make a beginning at theology.

I fear that my way of looking at the Bible, my definition of exegesis, has not been gripped enough by the implications of Martin Luther's statement that 'if you preach the Gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time you are not preaching the Gospel at all' (Sider, *ibid.*, p. 231 p. 58). My model for doing theology has been held captive by the same ideology of objectivism that Walter Wink sees as the bankruptcy behind the classic pattern of historico-grammatical exegesis. 'By detaching the text from the stream of my existence, Biblical criticism has hurled it into the abyss of an objectified past' (*The Bible, in Human Transformation*, Fortress Press, 1973, p. 4). I cannot agree with Wink that the answer is a psycho-analytic approach to the text, but I find his charges hurt my evangelical model of exegesis, or syntactic word study, as much as the Liberal one he has in mind. I wonder if what I have comfortably thought of as my Reformed model of objective exegesis pulls me away from the missiological challenge which the concrete reality of the poor presents to the world Christian, rather than sensitizing me of it. I wonder if I have still more to learn from Calvin and his methodology of *theologia pietatis*, which offered our world a way of doing theology radically different from Lightfoot, Westcott, and F. F. Bruce. What did Karl Barth see in Calvin's method when, in his preface to the second edition of his commentary on Romans (1921), he notes: 'How energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text. sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the 16th century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the 16th century hears.' I have no desire to cling to the existentialist mould Barth saw as the Calvinist's counterpart for the 20th century. But I no longer desire either to cling to the crypto-rationalist model of 'objective' exegesis that makes our response as images of God to the world's poor an accountability primarily to 'the guild of Biblical scholars'. I am equally sure David Jones does not want that either. But do our word studies begin at the wrong place and build walls instead of breaking them down?<sup>1</sup>

How then does Scripture function if 'objective' exegesis is defined as a myth? How shall I answer Bultmann's virtually rhetorical question, 'Is exegesis without presuppositions possible?' if I now question the only legitimate presupposition he seemed willing to admit, 'the historical method of interrogating the text', p. 232 history understood by him as a continuum that 'cannot be rent by the interference of supranatural, transcendent powers'? (*Existence and Faith*, Meridian Books, 1960, p. 291). Am I left only with 'an *existentiell* encounter with the text'? Shall I, with Frederick Herzog, endorse Bultmann's argument simply by saying that Bultmann (and Wink) must now add a 'rider' to their argument, namely, 'the socio-economic context of exegetical work' ('Liberation Hermeneutic as Ideology Critique?' *Interpretation*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, 391)? With Herzog,

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<sup>1</sup> I have given more elaborate treatment to this classical model of exegesis in 'Contextualization: A New Method for Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 10. No. 1 (January, 1978).



am I left with a return to the quest for the historical Jesus, only this time to an affirmation of Jesus' self hood as freedom and liberation?

I think not. In reaction to Bultmann and Herzog, I decry any methodology which starts with an acknowledgement of our preunderstanding, even with the socio-economic concreteness of our reality, and offers us no inerrant canon by which to judge that preunderstanding. Again, I do not ask simply that our theology be concrete, what Frederick Herzog might call our 'solidarity with the despised and forgotten'. I argue that if theology is to be theology, it begins, not abstractly with the Bible, as a mine of proof-texts awaiting the chisel of the systematic theologian, but with what John Murray called 'exegesis ... regulated by the principle of Biblical theology', the Bible as the inerrant history of special revelation. I seek to put our Biblical study of the poor under new management, under the eschatological domination of history with Christ as the realized center of its promises, the New Testament as the end-point of the process of revelation history.

With Richard B. Gaffin, I see exegesis itself as 'misunderstood if Biblical theology is seen as no more than a step (even the most important) in the exegetical process. It does not appear to be going too far to say that in "Biblical theology", that is, effective recognition of the redemptive-historical character of Biblical revelation, the principle of context, of the analogy of Scripture, the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, so central in the Reformation tradition of Biblical interpretation, finds its most pointedly Biblical realization and application. All exegesis ought to be Biblical-theological' (*The New Testament Student and Theology*, John H. Skilton, ed., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 45-6).

How should this methodology affect my study of the poor in the [p. 233](#) Bible? I should not spend 11 out of 17 pages of typescript on the Old Testament and the poor and only three on the New Testament (and most of those in the Book of Revelation). Or, as Ronald Sider does, three rich, full chapters (Sider, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-130) without a proportionate focus on Jesus, not simply in his incarnational identification with the poor (pp. 68-9) but Jesus in his redemptive work of substitution as the suffering poor man of [Isaiah 53](#). With Herman Ridderbos, I should analyze the Gospel message of the Kingdom of God as 'the Gospel of the poor' (*Coming of the Kingdom*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962, pp. 185-92). I should underline, perhaps more than David Jones does in the opening sentence of his paper, those critical occasions in the gospels when Jesus interprets his mission in terms of bringing good news to the poor. And I should want to analyze those commandments of Jesus regarding giving to the poor ([Matthew 19:21](#), [Luke 12:16ff.](#); [16:19ff.](#)) as applications of the demands of the Kingdom (Ridderbos, *ibid.*, pp. 321-9). And then I should be ready to turn to the task of Jesus' people with regard to the poor as it is reflected in Acts and the rest of the New Testament. I should struggle to see (and help others see) the divinely inspired agony of Isaiah over the injustice of his people's treatment of the poor (a category in the prophets closely related to 'the remnant' concept) issuing in Isaiah's prophecies of the coming *Goel* who would 'redeem' his orphaned, widowed kinsmen ([Isaiah 43:14](#); [54:5](#); [59:20](#)), the coming King who would judge his people with righteousness, and God's afflicted with justice ([Psalm 72:2ff.](#)), the coming Poor man ([Psalm 22:1ff.](#)) who, in his own atoning suffering as slave/servant, bears our sorrows. And I should see this as the center of the New Testament focus on Jesus, 'the Poor Man', who takes upon his lips the words of the poor man's agony as the words of Messianic redemption ([Matthew 27:46](#)), one more royal Messianic title alongside 'Son of Man', 'Son of God', 'Lord'. My effort in all these suggestions is not meant as a corrective for David's exegesis (I have no radical disagreements with it) nor even an implementation of it. I am simply sketching where I feel a Biblical theological model might go in its analysis



of the Biblical view of the poor. I offer no suspicions David might disagree with it. Balance is always hard to obtain in a paper with deadlines of brevity. I still engage in self-reaction.  
p. 234

The danger will always be that Biblical theology will become an abstractionist discipline and not a conscientizing instrument, an aid for understanding some Pauline theology of the poor, and not ours. Brevard Childs reminds us of its failure in precisely this area in the past (*Biblical Theology in Crisis*, Westminster Press, 1970, pp. 123ff.). Even the eschatological 'now' of our stance between the 'already' of Christ's first coming and the 'not yet' of his second coming can be manipulated to abstract the history of redemption from our place in it with Peter and Paul and John ([1 Corinthians 10:11](#)), a *Heilsgeschichte* that runs parallel to, but never touches, *Weltgeschichte*.

I decry any methodology, even that which we call Biblical theology, if it issues in a pseudo-gnostic notion of revelation in or by itself, revelation without a covenant call to action towards the poor, commissioned by the inherent authority of God's covenant truth. I argue that if theology is to be Biblical theology, it ends. not in the self-reassurance of an exegetical job well done, but in the re-appraisal again of those demands and solutions we originally brought to it at the initiation of our participation in the 'hermeneutical circle'. In the language of Childs, 'each new generation standing in its particular moment of history searches the Scriptures in order to discern the will of God, and strives to receive guidance towards the obedient life that must be pursued within concrete issues of the world' (Childs, *ibid.*, p. 131).

How has David Jones' Biblical analysis, or Ridderbos', made me ask again, in the face of my wealth and my whiteness, 'Who is my neighbor?' How has Amos' call for a tidal wave of justice ([Amos 5:24](#)) sent me to the sirens of Seoul, Korea with a word of good news from God to the prostitute and pimps and the police who support the system? Will James' remarkable declaration of the literal poor as the special objects of divine favor say to me, 'The rich must live more simply that the poor may simply live'? Will a Biblical *diakonia*, contextualized by Jesus into clothing for the naked and visits to prison ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)), open my heart to brothers and sisters in prisons in South Korea or Russia, the images of God defiled by the power of the state? Will the Pauline exaltation of the 'new man' formed out of black and white. Gentile and Jew, allow us, with David Bosch, to question the legitimacy of the efforts of the Church in South Africa to define a group of p. 235 people solely as an ethnic entity, as an 'ordinance of creation' ('The Church and the Liberation of Peoples', *Missionalia*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 34-5)? Or will that presupposition be allowed to remain as the 'hidden curriculum' of a C.W.H. Boshoff ('Church and Mission and the Liberation of Nations in the South African Context', *Missionalia*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 51-2)?

I am hurt by these questions. And I fear any practitioner of Biblical theology who asks them unscathed. Thank you, David. for your essay which makes me ask them again. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend' ([Proverbs 27:6](#)).

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## Theology for the People

# *The Relationship of Evangelism to Social Justice and Community Development*

by BRUCE J. NICHOLLS

EVANGELISM, SOCIAL justice and community development have always been central to the Great Commission and to Christian mission. They are implicit in the action of Jesus when he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal ([Luke 9:1-2](#)). During the Middle Ages in Europe, communities of monks through their monasteries preached, taught and started medical and agricultural work. During the last 150 years, evangelical Protestant missions have pioneered throughout the Third World humanitarian services and developmental programmes alongside evangelism and church planting. Through the faithful preaching of the Gospel, social justice has been brought to many individuals and communities. However, during the last three decades the relationship of evangelism to the wider mission of the Gospel has once again become an acute issue. Population explosion, the effect of radical economic and political changes and the drift of rural people into the cities, have confronted the Church with an estimated three billion people who are still unevangelised. At the same time the escalation of poverty and social and political oppression has awakened the evangelical conscience to the agony of a vast suffering humanity. United Nations sources calculate that on a conservative estimate more than 500 million people are suffering from hunger and near starvation. On the basis of present statistics, approximately 10,000 people in Africa, Asia and Latin America died of starvation during the last 24 hours. Tomorrow another 10,000 will die. With our meagre resources of people, skills and finance what are our priorities? Must we keep evangelism separate from the struggle for justice and community development lest the goal of conversion and church planting is lost in the pressures of meeting human need? Or can they be [p. 237](#) held together in a marriage relationship without weakening the priority of each?

The Lausanne Covenant affirmed: '... we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ.'

In India, the growing awareness of the need to relate these different elements of the Church's mission clearly surfaced at the All-India Congress on Evangelism at Devlali in January 1977,<sup>1</sup> where it was emphasised that if these ministries were not related both in the villages and in the urban and industrial cities with their massive problems of depressed communities, Christians forfeit the right to be heard. India, like many countries in the Third World, is in the process of choosing between the political options of turning to culturally religious oriented political parties, to a dictatorship, or to radical Marxist socialism. We affirm that the hope of India and of any nation lies in a spiritually dynamic Church which manifests in its message and lifestyle, a radically new society of human relationships which has power to change human nature, to offer a new worldview and new motives for caring and serving of the poor and the oppressed. This does not mean

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<sup>1</sup> *Go Forth and Tell* (New Delhi: AICOME, 1977).

that the Church becomes an alternative political party, but that it becomes a spiritual and moral force in society, rebuking evil, proclaiming personal and community freedom and being the light and salt to whatever system of political rule is in power. It is a tragedy that the Christian Church has become so secularised that many of her leaders have lost faith in the power of the Church in the world and are turning to secular and to Marxist methods to liberate the poor and achieve justice in society.

The call to evangelicals is to formulate a Biblical Theology of Mission that relates the Church's mission of evangelism and Church nurture to the wider ministry of social justice and development in [p. 238](#) the context of a given historical situation, and to work out its practical implications for the Church's own community life and the nature of its influence on the religious and secular pluralistic society. This is a task that must be undertaken in context but also at a supra-cultural international level. Churches and aid and development agencies responsible for the stewardship of vast resources of money and people are seeking such guidelines. The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship recently decided to establish a Study and Encounter group to work on this theme. This article is an exploratory introduction to the subject.

## **FROM SOCIAL SERVICE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The concept of community development is not new. It has been with us since the founding of the social and cultural structures of society ([Genesis 4](#)). During the relatively stable and static societies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Christian missions concentrated on social service and caring ministries. Through service programmes, they sought to meet the needs of individuals and families. They did many things *for* people. They educated their children, ran hospital and health clinics for their sick, cared for their orphans and gave them employment in Christian institutions. The New Testament churches functioning in the somewhat similar stable society of the Graeco-Roman world also cared for the orphan, the widow and the sick. and so established a model that is inherent in the Church's wider ministry. However, new factors in our contemporary world have focused attention on the need to go beyond this form of service ministry. The radical changes that have taken place since 1945—population explosion, advance in technology, the widening gap of rich and poor, the wave of politically oppressive governments, cannot be compared with those of other periods in history. Human survival is at stake. The causes and not just the symptoms of human alienation and suffering need analysing and correcting.

The concept of community development goes beyond relief and social service to an understanding of the total well-being of any given community. Its goal is to enable people to become economically self-reliant, to establish community harmony, to achieve [p. 239](#) social justice for the poor and oppressed, and to ensure moral integrity among the rulers. It aims for freedom of the people through participation in the decision-making processes of economic and political power so that all in the community may achieve that human dignity that belongs to the true nature of man. Development is a total social process in which the people themselves. and not the elite managers and technicians, control the development process. The crucial question becomes: How can people be helped to create more just anti human relationships between rich and poor societies, and to become aware of their true human dignity and place in society?

## **ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Through Economic Growth**

During the last two to three decades, stress has been laid on massive assistance to ensure economic growth. Donor agencies have shifted their emphasis from financial aid to the poor to assisting community development. In India, since the Bihar famine of 1967–68, development aid poured into the country from foreign governments and United Nations sources and from numerous private agencies, particularly those with Christian motivation. The question that is now being asked by both donor agencies and the receiver groups is: 'Have these new programmes succeeded?' Professor C. T. Kurien of Madras Christian College cites the Government of India document entitled *Towards An Approach to the Fifth Plan* (1972), which stated: 'Economic development in the last two decades has resulted in an all-round increase in *per capita* income. The proportion of the poor, defined as those living below a basic standard of consumption, has slightly come down, yet the absolute number of people below the poverty line today is just as large as it was two decades ago. And these people living in abject poverty constitute between two-fifths and one half of all Indian citizens.' Dr. Kurien then observes: 'And so the cliché has come true in our case: two decades of planned economic development has led to the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer.'<sup>2</sup>

The lesson of these two decades is that economic development p. 240 by itself is not enough. John Staley of OXFAM notes that it is becoming clear that the expectation of that time was unrealistic. More aid does not necessarily lead to more development. More loans for wells do not necessarily lead to more water for irrigation. An agency may lend money for wells but the farmer is under great pressure to offer a high dowry and an expensive feast for his daughter's wedding and so the immediate pressure of social status takes priority and the money is misappropriated. Such factors in practice are extremely difficult to control. The issues are basically moral.

The theory of economic growth has been based on the free flow of supply and demand and the profit motive. It has resulted in a high standard of living for a few developed nations and for a minority in the undeveloped nations. The hope that in time the prosperity resulting from industrialisation and technology will trickle down to the masses and so reduce the gap between the rich and the poor is more an utopian dream than a reality. The wealth of the industrialised nations is growing out of all proportion to that of the poor nations who depend on their primary products for development growth. The fluctuation of the law of supply and demand and unjust tariffs work against the poorer countries. For example, although Brazil's coffee exports increased 90% between 1953 and 1961, the total revenue earned from coffee dropped by 35%. The effect of the serious decline in the relative prices of primary products exported by developing countries, as against the rising costs of manufactured articles from the developed countries, is well illustrated by the fact that in 1954 it cost Brazil 14 bags of coffee to buy one US jeep; by 1968 that one jeep cost Brazil 45 bags of coffee.<sup>3</sup> Less than 6% of the world's population who live in the United States consume approximately one-third of the minerals and energies consumed worldwide each year. The effect of the drastic Arab oil price rise has been to cripple many poorer countries by forcing them to spend most of their precious foreign exchange in payment for imported oil.

### Through International Agencies

Many political leaders are turning to the United Nations agencies, p. 241 such as FAO, WHO, UNDP, UNCTAD, to ensure a better distribution of wealth, just international trade

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<sup>2</sup> *Poverty and Development*, (Madras: CLS, 1974), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> R. Sider, *Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IV P, 1977), p. 141.

and more assistance in economic development. Without doubt, these agencies have contributed to community development and have been able to put pressure on the economically and politically powerful nations to regulate their trade and aid on a more just basis. But these agencies in the end are powerless to change the bureaucratic and elitist political power structures, or to reduce corruption and bribery at the level of distribution.

### **Through Marxist Socialism**

It is not surprising that both intellectuals and the masses are seeking liberation through more radical alternatives. Marxist socialism, through constant propaganda, political and military coups and by creating internal unrest, has in recent years succeeded in gaining control of several under-developed nations. The Marxists promise to change the economic power structures by distributing ownership and by promising the masses participation in national planning and in the decision-making process of political rule. But the record of communist rule in Eastern Europe and in Fast Asia suggests that the Marxist alternative succeeds at the price of one form of oppression being replaced by another. Human dignity and freedom is still an eschatological hope.

Development through economic growth alone continues to remain a myth which is believed by both the affluent and the poor, the capitalist and the Marxist.

## **TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Community development is ultimately a spiritual and moral issue involving people, their motives, work-ethics and integrity in handling development resources. U. Thant defined development as economic growth plus social change. This has been the hope of the Gandhian idealism of selfless service. Chairman Moo Tse-Tung also recognised that economic development was not enough. His goal was nothing less than to change human nature, and his 'thoughts' were to become the standard for judging what is just and unjust, good and evil. He castigated self as the root cause of all social and economic evils. The partial success of the [P. 242](#) development programme in China has raised a fundamental question: 'Has Maoism been able to produce a classless new man?' A Chinese Christian who left China legally in the early 1970s wrote: 'Under Maoist political and social regimentation the more visible social and economic vices are effectively suppressed, and human endeavours are channelled to the approved goals. Maoist teaching through persuasive indoctrination has influenced to varying degrees the minds of the people. The Maoist thought reform has hardly touched the soul of the people, or brought a true conversion and rebirth in the image of the Maoist selfless man, which the Chairman himself is not. The Maoist revolution has changed the face of Chinese society and has greatly weakened the traditional Chinese ideas and values, but it has not changed the individual to any great extent.'<sup>4</sup> A group of Chinese researchers living in Hong Kong recently shared with me their observations of the deepening spiritual vacuum that is emerging in mainland China, as evidenced by a return to astrology, palmistry and spiritism among the common people.

The Gospel demands a total spiritual and moral revolution. Mark O. Hatfield, the evangelical U.S. Senator, stated at the national prayer breakfast in January 1976: 'What is required at this juncture in our history is a new revolution—a spiritual revolution that

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<sup>4</sup> 'New Man in China: Myth or Reality?', *Christianity and a New China*. (Pasadena, California: Lutheran World Federation, William Carey Library, 1976), Part II, pp. 46–8.



transforms our values and reshapes our corporate life.<sup>5</sup> This spiritual revolution, to be effective, must be a total revolution changing every level of culture and behaviour—worldviews, value systems, social institutions and outward behaviour and lifestyle. It demands a total revolution of:

(a) *Love towards God*: The Gospel is good news of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself and justifying the rebel sinner by grace through faith. The Gospel is good news that if any man is in Christ he is a new creature, and the hope of the Gospel is our re-creation in the image of Christ ([II Corinthians 5:17–18](#); [Ephesians 2:8, 16](#)). The result of this spiritual revolution is to restore the priority or true worship in the community and a [p. 243](#) new motivation for accepting the role of servanthood in the Church and in the world. Without a radical conversion to God in Christ, there is no salvation now or in the age to come. Evangelism may not always be the starting-point of mission but it is always the centre of mission.

(b) *Love towards one's neighbour*: Jesus summarised the second commandment as 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' ([Matthew 22:39](#)). True love of oneself is not an inverted form of selfishness but a witness to human dignity and to creation likeness in the image of God. It is a denial of self-centredness but not a denial of self-hood. Thus to love one's neighbour as oneself is to develop a level of interpersonal relationships which respects others as equal to oneself. There is no place for racial discrimination or sexist superiority or cultural arrogance. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made it clear that the neighbour is the stranger or enemy who is in need. Only the grace of God can enable a person to cross cultural barriers and love the unlovable either ethnically or socially. To love one's neighbour is inseparable from the first commandment of total love for God. Unless there is the restraint of love, the emphasis in liberation theology of conscientizing the oppressed masses through the dialectic of corporate reflection and corporate action can easily become the pretext for the use of violence to achieve social justice. It becomes a secular method to achieve a spiritual goal. In the social ethic of Jesus as he expounded it in the Sermon on the Mount, unjust means cannot be justified by just goals. Justice for the disciple of Christ flows from the over-plus of love which does not retaliate ([Matthew 5:31–40](#)). Nor will the disciple demand that the unbeliever accept his spiritual or moral principles. He will continue to act in love even when the recipient rejects his action or shows no gratitude. Christian social action stems from a deeper motive than human compassion. Therefore Christian service must always be 'in the name of Christ', whatever the response. To silence the *Name* in giving economic assistance is to betray the Gospel and to deceive the receiver. In certain religious or political situations it may not be possible to verbalise the *Name* in the sense of preaching, but the giver, by his commitment to Christ and lifestyle, bears witness to the *Name*. Conversely, to preach the Gospel but not to express human compassion is dead faith (I [p. 244](#) [John 3:17](#); [James 2:14–16](#)). Dr. Visser 't Hooft, in his retiring address at the WCC Uppsala Assembly, rightly said: 'A Christianity that has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt, and is not only insipid in itself, but useless to the world. But a Christianity that would use the vertical dimension as a means to escape from the responsibilities for and in the common life of men, is a denial of the incarnation of God's life for the world manifested in Christ.'<sup>6</sup>

(c) *Stewardship towards nature*: Good news is a spiritual revolution towards the renewal of nature. At the end of the sixth day of creation, 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' ([Genesis 1:31](#)). In creation, God commissioned man, male

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<sup>5</sup> Cited by C. Rene Padilla, 'God's Word and Man's Myths', *Themelios*, September 1977, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Cited by George Hoffman, 'The Social Responsibilities of Evangelism', *Let The Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Worldwide Publications, 1975), p. 698.



and female, to subdue and have dominion over creation, to till and keep the garden of Eden. God created man to be a steward of the created world. Consequent to the Fall. God gave to the covenanted people of Israel just and humane laws and made them obligatory. God purposed that his people should enjoy to the full the fruits of nature, but that they should do so with thankfulness to the Lord God, the giver of all life ([Deuteronomy 8](#)). 'The earth is the Lord's' ([Leviticus 25:23](#); [Psalm 24:1](#)). The judgement of God falls on those who abuse their stewardship. The principle of the Jubilee Year ([Leviticus 25](#)) was to declare that the land and its fruits belong to the Lord and that property rights are subordinate to the needs of the poor. While many of the Levitical laws may no longer be directly applicable in a technological age, their principles remain valid. For example, the maintaining of the balance between the use and replenishing of the soil, typified in the sabbatical law of fallow ground ([Leviticus 25:1-7](#)), is very relevant in Asia where the abuse of the 'green revolution' threatens the future fertility of the land. The selfish greed of man in the wasteful use of the nonrenewable resources, such as Fossil fuels and minerals, also comes under the judgement of God.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God stands at the centre **P. 245** of the preaching, teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ ([Matthew 4:23](#); [9:35](#)). In the Incarnation, the bearer of the Messianic Kingdom came. Jesus acknowledged this in his self-identification with the Messianic hope of [Isaiah 61](#) ([Luke 4:18-21](#)). He began his ministry by saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe the Gospel' ([Mark 1:15](#)).

The relationship of the Lordship of Christ to the Kingdom of God is fundamental to understanding the relationship of evangelism to social justice. In the Old Testament, the Kingdom is used for Yahweh's Lordship over the whole universe ([Psalm 103:19](#)) and in a particular sense over his chosen people Israel in a covenant relationship of grace that extended to the whole of their personal and community life ([Exodus 19:5-6](#); [Deuteronomy 7:6-9](#)). The reign of God demanded total obedience to the commandments of God. The Kingdom looked for its fulfilment in the promise of a Messianic King.

Jesus pointed to his own Lordship as a 'sign' of the Kingdom. In his power to cast out demons he witnessed to his victory over the Kingdom of Beelzebul ([Luke 11:14-20](#)), in his power to heal the paralytic he proclaimed his right to forgive sins ([Matthew 2:5-12](#)), and in his power to heal the blind, the lame, and the leper and to raise the dead, he acknowledged to the disciples of John his Messiahship ([Matthew 11:2-5](#)). These signs witness to his Lordship over the whole of creation. They are pointers to the dynamic nature of his reign.

The Lordship of Christ over principalities and powers is also crucial to understanding the nature of the Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> On the Cross, Christ disarmed these powers and triumphed over them ([Colossians 2:15](#)) and 'delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son' ([Colossians 1:13](#)). However, total victory still awaits the triumphal return of the King ([1 Corinthians 15:24-26](#); [Revelation 20:7-15](#)). It is now popular, along with John Howard Yoder,<sup>8</sup> to interpret principalities and powers in terms of evil socio-political structures of society. While his exegesis may

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<sup>7</sup> See 'The Kingdom and Cosmic Battle' by Anthony Stone, *TRACI/ETS Journal*, New Delhi, May 1975, pp. 17-20.

<sup>8</sup> *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972).

be questioned, his emphasis on p. 246 social and institutional evils (along with personal sins) as visible manifestations of demonic evil is valid.

Jesus taught that when people repent, believe the Gospel and acknowledge his Lordship by doing his will they 'enter the Kingdom' ([Matthew 5:20; 7:21](#); etc.). As John Stott, Ronald Sider, Rene Padilla and others have shown, salvation in the New Testament is always a God-related term, and while it is not to be confused with changed ethical behaviour and social justice, salvation cannot be isolated from ethical behaviour. Only those who confess Christ as Lord enter the Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

Some implications of this theme include:

(a) Evangelism and social action flow from a common source, the confession 'Jesus Christ is Lord'.

(b) Christ alone can bring the Kingdom on earth. It is his act of saving grace. It is a fatal error to assume that we can establish the Kingdom by our own power, either through evangelism or socio-political action. Since the battle against principalities and powers is cosmic, victory is to be gained through prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray: 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven' ([Matthew 6:10](#)).

(b) When the consummation of the Kingdom takes place at the final Day of the Lord, the whole of creation, now in bondage, will be liberated ([Romans 8:19-23](#)). Mao Tse-Tung is as much a servant of the Lord as were Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. Through the destruction of false religion and unjust social structures, and through physical and spiritual suffering, the sovereign Lord is now preparing the people of China to hear the Gospel, repent and enter the Kingdom. On the basis of growing evidence, I, for one, believe that one day the Church in China will emerge as possibly the strongest Church in Asia.

## THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

The crisis in the worldwide Church today is one of self-identity. This is especially true of small and socially weak churches with a minority or communal complex, such as many of the churches in p. 247 India. Is the Church just a sociological mirror of the Western missionary movement, or can she with humble confidence claim to be 'the people of God'? Before the Church can discover her function in the world she must rediscover her relationship to the Kingdom of God.

The Lausanne Covenant stated: 'The Church is the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel.' The Church therefore stands in a unique relationship with the Kingdom. History has shown the mistake of either identifying the institutional Church with the Kingdom (the traditional Roman Catholic view) or of reducing the Church to a culturally conditioned human society (the radical liberal view). The New Testament never identifies them as co-terminous, but without the Church there is no Kingdom. As Peter Beyerhaus aptly said: 'The truth is that the Messianic Kingdom presupposes a Messianic core unity.'<sup>10</sup>

Insofar as Christ is Lord of the life and activity of the Church, to that extent she is the visible manifestation of the Kingdom—visible because the redeemed members have 'entered the Kingdom, and are visible! The Church is a pilgrim Church, on the way to becoming the people of God, a consummation that will not take place until Christ returns

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<sup>9</sup> See the author's article 'The Kingdom of God, The Church and the Future of Mankind', *TRACI/ETS Journal*, New Delhi, January 1976, pp. 33-8.

<sup>10</sup> 'World Evangelization and the Kingdom of God', *Let The Earth Hear His Voice*, p. 288.

and establishes his Kingdom on earth. Christ created the Church as his agent of the Kingdom.

Orlando Costas points to four characteristics of the Church.<sup>11</sup> She is the community of God's people ([1 Peter 2:9-10](#)), the body of Christ ([Romans 12:5](#), etc.), the temple of the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#), etc.) and a visible and structured fellowship ([Acts 2:42](#)). Central to these images is that of a covenanted community which expresses its lifestyle in worship, fellowship, witnessing, compassionate caring and selfless serving. Christ meant the Church to be a community of reconciliation ([Ephesians 2:11-22](#)), a community in which each gives according to his ability and receives according to his needs ([Acts 2:45, 4:34-35, 20:35](#)), and a community without racial or cultural distinctions ([Galatians 3:28](#)). The Church is meant to be a model of redeemed relationships in the world. When the Church fails, as alas! she so often does, she p. 248 comes under the judgement of God but is renewed in hope. Christ is the model of the Church's ministry in the world: 'as the Father has sent me, even so I send you' ([John 20:21](#)). This calls for 'a similar deep and costly penetration of the world'. The Great Commission sets a balanced goal of evangelism, Church planting and social service and Pentecost offers the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Without these, there is no motive for witness, no power for establishing just human relationships, and no work-ethic for service.

There is a general awareness today of the need to recover the prophetic function of the Church's mission in the world. Alas! many churches do no more than join with secular organisations in protesting against social injustice, whereas the true prophet of God, speaking in the name of God with divine power, rebukes sin and evil in the Church and in the world. The Church ought to be the conscience of the nation, exposing the deeper nature of sin and calling the people to repentance and faith. The prophet uncovers the hidden sins which society conveniently ignores. This was preeminently true of the Old Testament prophets. Amos, for example, rebuked the rich, including their wives, for their disproportionate wealth ([3:13-4:1](#); [6:4](#)) and their oppression of the poor ([2:6](#); [6:1-7](#)). He rebuked the judges for accepting bribes ([5:10-15](#)) and the people as a nation for their syncretistic worship ([2:4](#); [4:4-5](#); [5:21](#)).

Evangelical prophets have also been strong in rebuking individual and personal sins against God and one's neighbour, but weak in discerning the nature of social sins covered up by the acceptable structures of society. An earlier generation rebuked the social evil of slavery and child abuse in factories. Somehow today evangelicals continue to have an 'uneasy conscience' about the institutionalised evils of their consumer society—racial and sexist discrimination in employment, unjust trade tariffs against weaker nations, unfair monopolies of multi-national corporations, police brutality in rightist dictatorships, and so forth. Many good-living Christians are just not aware of their corporate responsibility for these social evils. To maintain the *status quo* and to leave the plea for justice to secular Christians or the Marxists is to deny the Gospel. In his ethical manifesto, Jesus spoke of the Church's prophetic ministry as being salt and light in the world (Matthew p. 249 [5:13-16](#)), metaphors which speak of the Church's moral power to expose evil, restrain it, and to preserve what is true and good in every culture and society.

This raises an important issue. Can the Church impose its Christian ethical standards on a pluralistic society? If the Church understands her role in the world as comparable to the suffering servant role of her Lord, then the answer is clearly no. Her power lies not in the use of force but in the moral power of suffering love that does not retaliate. Jesus exhorted his followers to take up their cross daily and follow him ([Luke 9:23](#)). The positive role of the servant is well illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan and in

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<sup>11</sup> *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*, 1974, pp. 21-35.

the sensitive awareness of human need by the righteous, whereas the severity of judgement on the insensitive is almost unbelievably severe ([Matthew 25:31–46](#)).

Some implications of this theme include:

- (a) As a visible sign of the Kingdom, the Church as the new community of God's people ought to be a model of just and humane relationships, of sacrificial caring and service, which draws the world to the Saviour. The goal of all evangelism and development programmes ought to be the establishing of such models. This presupposes the priority of revival and Church renewal, for the Holy Spirit is the true agent of Church growth.
- (b) Local churches must break out of 'ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society' with the whole Gospel with all its social, economic and political implications. If the churches are not the conscience of their communities, then they have lost their saltiness and deserve to be trodden under foot by men.
- (c) An over-institutionalised Church often lives in the security of its wealth and in the fear of losing its institutions, and so is unable to exercise her prophetic voice. A special committee appointed to study the life and work of the Church of South India confessed the Church's silence during the days of the Emergency 'because of the fear of losing the institutions and the sense of security.'<sup>12</sup>
- (d) The greatest need in the churches is for her members joyfully to assume a servant role in society. The Lausanne Covenant noted: 'A Church which preaches the Cross must itself be marked by the Cross', and again: 'Those of us who live in affluent circumstances p. 250 accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.'

## **TOWARDS AN APPLIED THEOLOGY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

In the contextualisation of a theology of evangelism, social justice, and community development, a number of operational principles emerge.

### **1. Priority should be given to diagnostic research**

The response of Christians to the appeals of evangelical aid and development agencies, such as World Vision, TEAR Fund, and the World Relief Commission, continues to expand each year. The responsible stewardship of these resources of people and money suggests that greater attention should be given to research and the evaluation of development projects. Areas suggested for research include:

- (a) *Theological reflection on the Biblical basis for mission.* The findings of the Church of South India Special Committee are significant: 'We need a better and more adequate theological basis for our social action, a basis that is founded in the total gospel and its implication for society.'<sup>13</sup> Theological colleges and study centres, especially those in the Third World such as TRACI, New Delhi and KAIROS, Buenos Aires, should be encouraged to give priority to this area of research.
- (b) *Diagnostic analysis in context of the causes of poverty, injustice and oppression.* Dr. E. F. Schumacher has suggested that two phenomena which foreign aid has failed to alleviate are mass unemployment and mass immigration to the cities.<sup>14</sup> The Five Year plans of countries, notably India and Turkey, regularly show a greater volume of unemployment

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<sup>12</sup> *The Church of South India After Thirty Years* (Madras: CLS, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> *The Church of South India After Thirty Years*, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Small is Beautiful* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 163.

at the end of each plan.<sup>15</sup> Further, Schumacher notes that in nearly all developing countries there is emerging a 'dual economy' of the 15% modern section, confined to the big cities, existing side by side with the 85% who live in the villages and small towns.<sup>16</sup> How should these factors affect the policies of mission and development agencies? p. 251 (c) *Visiting Evaluation Teams*. Competent and experienced teams are needed to evaluate existing projects and those requesting help. Areas of evaluation should include: the degree of success in achieving goals, the effective participation of local people in the management of the project, the degree of benefit to the poorer section of the community, the increase in employment index, the promotion of more just and humane relationships, and the degree of involvement of local churches in the project.

## 2. Projects ought to be people-oriented

Schumacher suggests: 'Development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organisation and discipline.'<sup>17</sup> The success of a project is in relation to its effectiveness to create new motivation for work and mutual caring, and in bringing about a change of worldview that restores dignity of personhood and hope for the future. George Hoffman referred at Lausanne to a rehabilitation programme in Bangladesh led by New Zealand missionary, Peter McNee, in which the local people rebuilt their own homes devastated by civil war with the help of timber and corrugated sheeting purchased by TEAR Fund. Twenty young Bengalis were given on-the-job training in carpentry for the building of these 1,200 houses.<sup>18</sup> The Church of South India report states: 'Our social action is not merely aimed at the physical aspects such as school buildings and workshops or latrines and hospitals, but to build a people who are self-confident, organised, caring and united, working together to achieve a common goal of development.'<sup>19</sup> The 'Faith and Farm' project in Nigeria is another excellent example of an evangelical project geared 'to train African Christians to teach other farmers and their families to recognise that Jesus Christ is Lord of every part of their lives.'<sup>20</sup> Other projects that are people-centred include village co-operatives which provide fertilizers, improved hybrid seeds and where necessary cash, such as the one in the village of Otterhotti in India.<sup>21</sup> Taylor also describes an effective Credit Union scheme for a poultry farm set up by church leaders in Kampala, Uganda, p. 252 to help solve the problem of poverty and unemployment. One of the findings of the All-India Congress on Evangelism at Devlali in 1977 that attracted wide attention was the need for churches to establish employment exchanges for unemployed youth.

## 3. Projects ought to be labour-intensive

In the past, emphasis has been placed by development agencies on capital-intensive projects—building schools, hospitals, orphanages, and even power stations and factories.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> *Small is Beautiful*, p. 168.

<sup>18</sup> Hoffman, *op. cit.*, p. 705.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Hoffman, *op. cit.*, p. 703.

<sup>21</sup> John V. Taylor, *Enough is Enough* (London: SCM, 1975), p. 96.



In certain economic and political situations, this has been a necessary base and will continue to be so. However, in others there ought to be a shift to more labour-intensive projects that provide greater employment and wider participation in community life. The Church of South India report is critical of church-controlled institutions which in general are an unnecessary burden on the Church, requiring large resources of personnel and money. Some are neither technically competent nor Christian and generally are contributing to the increasing number of educated unemployed. The report calls for a moratorium in building new institutions, asks how a selected number can again play a pioneer role in society and suggests a rethinking of the place of hostels in developing men and women to act as leaven in society.<sup>22</sup> Schumacher's call for the effective use of intermediate technology using local resources, appropriate to the people in their own environment, is being given increasing priority by governments and development agencies. This was very evident in the government-sponsored *Agri Expo '77* in New Delhi. Asha Handicrafts, aided by TEAR Fund, is an example of a successful attempt by Christians at pioneering village arts and crafts and developing competently run marketing channels throughout the world. Christian churches have a unique opportunity for this type of development programme.

#### **4. Local Churches ought to be the appropriate agents for community development**

If the basis for effective community development is a change in human nature and new worldviews, more just and humane relationships and an ethically motivated work-ethic, then the local community **p. 253** of the people of God must be the agent for this change. As witnessing models, they alone can take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The emerging concept of small labour-intensive projects is particularly appropriate to the service ministry of local churches. By mobilising the total resources and skills of her members, a local church, whether urban or rural, should be able to undertake one or more projects. These might include child care centres for working mothers, or health and family planning centres, if there are doctors or nurses in the congregation who are willing to give their voluntary services. Areas of education might include adult education classes, training in basic vocational skills for slum and depressed children, small technical training projects in carpentry, welding, or cycle and radio repair, where there are members of congregations skilled to teach others. In rural churches, small projects in assisting farmers to grow better crops, raise poultry, begin fish farming or start co-operatives, are appropriate. Where the Church is small or non-existent or spiritually ineffective, it may be necessary for extension para-church agencies to pioneer such projects. The ACRA project in central India, led by a dedicated and well educated Christian couple, is pioneering new areas of comprehensive rural development integrated with evangelism and church planting. Such models will motivate local churches to new levels of service. Mission and development agencies should major on making skilled and culturally sensitive personnel available for this type of ministry.

In summary, the concluding remarks of the Church of South India report are worthy of serious reflection and prayerful action: 'A change in our commitment rather than financial resources is the priority of the day. Ultimately it is God's mission and we are His instruments. It is He who sends us continuously into the world even when we hesitate or feel reluctant. Justice, peace and dignity are not mere human concerns. They are the on-

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<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 34–6.



going concerns of God. We are asked to share in His concerns and make it possible for the people to realise them.’<sup>23</sup>

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# The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20—A Missionary Mandate or Not?

by PETER T. O’BRIEN

## I. THE CURRENT DEBATE

OVER THE past two decades there has been a critical re-examination, by many Christians, of the place and significance of Christian missions and missionary societies. In some quarters at least there has been a fresh appraisal of the Biblical basis of missions and a reaction to a lack of theology of mission evidenced in some quarters by the quoting of proof texts

The Great Commission of [Matthew 28:18–20](#) is one such passage and its use in this connection has been regarded by some as illegitimate on the grounds that it has nothing to do with missionary activity at all beyond the apostolic age. The words, it is argued, were addressed to the eleven disciples (v. [16](#)) and to them alone. A further refinement of this view is that the commission was given to Jewish Christians who were to make disciples among their Fellow Jews of the first century AD that they too might believe in Jesus as Messiah. But either way the passage is said to have no immediate application to the 20th century, or, if so, then only after considerable qualification.

## II. THE GREAT COMMISSION IN EARLIER TIMES<sup>1</sup>

During the last decade of the 18th century William Carey made his powerful plea for missionary endeavour in the non-Christian world. His urgent call to witness, as is well-known, marked the [P. 255](#) beginning of the great century and a half of missionary proclamation.

In 1792. Carey had published his now-famous booklet entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. In it he argued that Christ’s command of [Matthew 28](#) was as binding on men of his day as it was on the

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<sup>23</sup> *Small is Beautiful*, p. 36. pp. 34–6.

<sup>1</sup> Note the treatment of H. R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids, 1961), pp. 15ff., to which I am indebted.

apostles. The command, he asserted, had not been repealed, there were still subjects to obey it, there had been no further revelation to counter it, and nothing stood in the way of obeying it.

That Carey should press these thoughts may seem strange to us. Yet the view he presented was unusual, even radical, for his contemporaries. The Reformers and the majority of the 17th century theologians believed the Great Commission was binding only on the apostles. When they died Christ's command died with them. Both Luther and Calvin held this view as did Martin Bucer, a Reformer with deep missionary concern. Bucer bemoaned the fact that Christian men of his day were willing to go to distant parts and exert themselves in various ways to gain material advantages but showed little concern for the spiritual welfare of those with whom they transacted business. But even Bucer, who encouraged his church's elders to take the matter in hand, did not have a view<sup>2</sup> different from that of the other Reformers.

How then does the Gospel spread into the world? According to the Reformers. *in principle*, it was declared to the world by the apostles. The preaching begun by them is 'like a stone thrown into the water: it makes ripples and circles around itself which move farther and farther outward ... until they reach the water's edge'.<sup>3</sup> From the death of the apostles onward 'the Church expands through witness in her immediate community or as a result of being scattered on account of persecution'.<sup>4</sup>

Although both in England and on the Continent subsequent to the Reformation there were some Christians with a missionary zeal, by and large the Protestant churches had a very poor record regarding missions—in contrast, be it noted, to the Roman Catholics. p. 256

So it was against this background of Reformation and post-Reformation thought that Carey set forth his views. The concern of this article, then, is not to question whether Carey was right in stirring up missionary interest among his contemporaries, but whether his exegesis of [Matthew 28:18–20](#) was correct.

### III. THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW 28:18–20

Although a number of New Testament scholars this century have proposed solutions to the problems of the *literary form* of the Great Commission in the hope of giving a more precise or accurate exegesis<sup>5</sup> of the paragraph there has as yet been no consensus.<sup>6</sup> The following are the most important proposals to date:

(a) *An Enthronement Hymn* (Otto Michel).

(b) *An Official Decree* (B. J. Malina).

(c) *A Covenant Renewal Manifesto* (H. Frankemoelle).

(The details of these proposals have been omitted—*Editor*.)

(d) *A Commissioning Narrative*. B. J. Hubbard, after making a scholarly survey of attempts to determine the literary form of [Matthew 28:16–20](#), examined the

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> B. J. Malina, 'The Literary Structure and Form of Matthew, XXVIII. 16–20', NTS 17 (1970–71), pp. 87–103, recognised that 'the literary form of these verses has to be determined before any adequate exegesis can be set forth' (p. 88).

<sup>6</sup> B. J. Hubbard, *The Matthaean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 26:16–20* (Missoula, 1974), p. 2. and his subsequent survey of the discussion on pp. 2–23.

commissioning narratives of the Old Testament to see whether they might provide a model for Matthew's account of Jesus' commission to his disciples. Twenty-seven commissioning narratives were analysed<sup>7</sup> beginning with Abraham's call ([Genesis 11:28–30; 12:1–4](#)) and those of other patriarchs, passing on to the commissionings of Moses ([Exodus 3:1ff.](#)) and Joshua ([Deuteronomy 31:14ff.; Joshua 1:1–11](#)), Isaiah ([Isaiah 6](#)), Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 1:1–10](#)), Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 1:1–3:15](#)) and the Servant of the Lord ([Isaiah 49:1–6](#)), through to Cyrus' commissioning of the Jews in Babylon to rebuild the Temple ([Ezra 1:1–5; II Chronicles 36:22ff.](#)). Hubbard detected, with some variations, a basic form consisting of seven elements, five of which could be paralleled in the Matthaean conclusion: p. 257

1. *Introduction*: providing circumstantial details such as time and place ([Matthew 28:16](#)).

2. *Confrontation*: God (or some human commissioner) appears on the scene to address the person(s) to be commissioned ([Matthew 28:17a, 18](#)).

3. *Reaction*: in several instances the person reacts to the divine presence with fear or is overcome with a sense of unworthiness ([Matthew 28:17b](#)).

4. The *Commission* itself: this is the central element in the form (found in all 27 Old Testament passages). In it the person(s) is instructed to undertake a specific task which may require him to assume a new role in life (e.g. the call of a prophet). ([Matthew 28:19b–20a](#)).

5. *Protest*: mentioned in half of the Old Testament passages (cf. 3: the *Reaction*) where the person indicates he is unable or unworthy to accomplish the commission. (No parallel in Matthew).

6. *Reassurance*: a feature which because of its importance to the one being commissioned is sometimes repeated or attended with a supplementary sign ([Matthew 28:20b](#)).

7. *Conclusion*: the commissioning narrative usually concludes with a statement that the one commissioned starts to carry out his work (no parallel in Matthew).

Apart from the structural characteristics, Hubbard drew attention to the following features of these commissionings: first, assuming we are not dealing with a monolithic form, this type 'persists in documents whose span of composition stretches from the Jahwist to the Chronicler.'<sup>8</sup> Secondly, not only the structure but also several themes, relevant to the Matthaean passage, reappear: the motif of universality, a stress on the observance of God's commandments, and the idea of God's continual protective presence. Thirdly, certain expressions are characteristic of these Biblical commissionings: 'I am (will be) with you', 'behold I', 'go', 'I command', 'all', etc. Finally, Hubbard drew attention to the point that the paragraphs analysed were very significant ones. 'They describe how Israel's patriarchs and prophets were summoned (*via* the commissioning formula) to participate in events which shaped the people's destiny.'<sup>9</sup> p. 258

(e) *Evaluation*: Of the four structural examinations of [Matthew 28](#) that have been reviewed Hubbard's seems the most reasonable since it is able to explain each of the elements. Further, the recurrence of certain themes and expressions seems to corroborate his formal examination. However, several qualifications are in order. First, Hubbard admits that the commissioning form was not monolithic within the Old Testament. [Matthew 28:16–20](#) itself does not contain all seven elements but omits the

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<sup>7</sup> Hubbard, *op. cit.*, pp. 32ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Protest and the Conclusion. The risen Jesus' words to the disciples that he would be with them 'always to the close of the age' form a suitable end to the Gospel as a whole, not simply to the paragraph. A further conclusion to the effect that the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded would have been an anti-climax. On somewhat similar grounds the omission of the Protest is explicable.

Secondly, in his concern to stress the structural relationship of [Matthew 28:16-20](#) with the commission narratives of the Old Testament, Hubbard has not given sufficient attention to covenants. Several of the paragraphs examined as commission narratives are to be understood as covenants between God and the individual (e.g. Abraham). Furthermore, the sixth element, the word of reassurance ('I will be with you', or its equivalent) is in fact bound up with the covenant slogan: 'I will be their God and they shall be my people'. Thus, although one may generally accept Hubbard's formal conclusions, it is Frankemöeller who has tied in [Matthew 28](#) closely with the covenantal promises of the Old Testament. Indeed, the great strength of the latter's whole work is that he views Matthew's Gospel, *in toto*, in the light of the fulfilment of covenant promises. This conjunction is seen still more clearly when we note that other covenantal themes and expressions from Genesis and Deuteronomy are taken up in Matthew's Great Commission. These themes and expressions are noted in the exegesis below.

Finally, while it is no doubt correct to note the similarities between the commission narratives of the Old Testament and [Matthew 28](#), one particular distinction stands out. All of God's commissions in the Old Testament have to do with *individual* patriarchs or prophets.<sup>10</sup> That of the risen Lord Jesus concerns p. 259 *disciples as a group*. It has therefore aptly been called 'The Great Commission'.

#### IV. AN EXEGESIS OF THE PARAGRAPH

These verses of [Matthew 28](#) are among the most important words of the whole Gospel. They serve as the climax, integrally related to the purpose of Matthew as a whole. Several terms and phrases found in this Great Commission which are rather difficult to interpret and on which there has been difference of opinion (e.g. 'make disciples', 'all nations', 'teaching', 'the end of the age'), have already been used in Matthew. These earlier uses help to throw light on the meaning of the Great Commission and thus reference will be made to them in our exegesis.

The division which follows is a three-fold one.<sup>11</sup> Yet the three sections are tied together by the word 'all' (Greek *pas*): 'all authority', v. [18](#); 'all the nations', v. [19](#); 'all things', v. [20](#); 'always', v. [20](#). The three statements are bound together.<sup>12</sup> They are all-embracing, all-inclusive.

(a) *The statement of authority by the risen Lord* (v. [18](#)). If v. [16](#) provides the introduction to the commissioning narrative, with its circumstantial details of time and place, then in vv. [17](#) and [18](#) we find that Jesus appears on the scene to address his disciples. His word is a declaration of authority: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (v. [18](#)).

It has been suggested in recent discussion that these words derive from the vision of the Son of Man in [Daniel 7:13-14](#). But is [Matthew 28:18](#) really a fulfilment of this passage?

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<sup>10</sup> The Commission of Israel in [Ezra 1:1-5](#) and [2 Chron. 36:22-3](#) is no real exception since it was Cyrus' commissioning.

<sup>11</sup> Note the careful exegetical treatment of W. Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel* (Munich, 3, 1964), pp. 21ff.

<sup>12</sup> So Bornkamm, *loc. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

Although there may be echoes of the language of [Daniel 7](#) no mention is made of ‘the Son of Man’, while his coming in [Daniel 7:13–14](#) with the clouds of heaven is understood in the Gospel with reference to the future ([24:30](#); [26:64](#)), probably the *parousia*. Our passage points to an authority or rule exercised by the resurrected Lord *here and now*.

The theme of authority (*exousia*) is mentioned frequently in the Synoptic Gospels and it occurs at significant points in Matthew [p. 260](#) to designate the divine authority of the earthly Jesus. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is said to have taught with authority, in contrast to the scribes ([7:29](#)). His authority over demons is one which may be exercised by his disciples on his behalf ([10:1](#)) as they preach the Kingdom (vv. [7–8](#)). Also significant is the reference to the Son of Man’s authority to forgive sins ([9:6, 8](#)), like [Matthew 28](#), an authority ‘given by God’,<sup>13</sup> while the answer to the chief priests and Jewish elders’ questions, ‘By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?’ is ‘God’. The only difference between the authority exercised by the earthly Jesus and that given to the risen Lord is its *universal extension*. The Giver and Source of this authority is the same, God himself. The recipient in both cases is one and the same person, the earthly Jesus and the resurrected Lord. In [Matthew 28](#), the authority is said to be complete (‘all’) and universal in its extent (‘in heaven and on earth’). The one who described himself as ‘gentle and lowly in heart’ and who invited men to take his yoke upon them ([11:29](#)) is the same person to whom all things were delivered by his Father ([11:27](#)),<sup>14</sup> and who has been exalted as Lord of all. His claim must therefore be one of total submission.

(b) *The risen Lord’s commission to the disciples* (vv. [19, 20a](#)). Jesus knows that such authority has been given to him (v. [18](#)). He now wields that authority in the command which follows. Indeed, the statement about all power serves as the ground (‘therefore’) for the commission. Because he possesses all authority and is Lord over all peoples he is able to make the claim on men and women to become his disciples.

i. *A missionary commission or not?* In almost half of the Old Testament commissioning narratives noted above the idiomatic expression ‘go’ (using the same Greek verb, *poreuomai*, as in [Matthew 28:19](#)) forms part of the commission ([Genesis 12:1, 24:4; Exodus 3:16; Joshua 1:2; Isaiah 6:9](#), etc.).<sup>15</sup> On occasion (e.g., [Genesis 12:1; 24:4](#)), a movement from one place to another [p. 261](#) is indicated. But frequently this verb ‘to go’ is used as an auxiliary, with little or no force of its own—not only in the commissioning narratives ([Judges 4:6; I Kings 19:15](#)) but also in other parts of the Old Testament material.<sup>16</sup> The same holds true in Matthew’s Gospel where this verb ‘go’ (as an aorist participle) is simply an auxiliary reinforcing the action of the main verb (e.g., [2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 28:7](#) as well as [28:19](#)). ‘In emphasizing the main verb, no idea of going need be present at all’.<sup>17</sup> The core of the command is the making of disciples, not the going. The idea of sending, being sent (i.e. from one place to another) is secondary and

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<sup>13</sup> A. Voegtle, ‘Das christologische und ekklesiologische von Matthew 28, 18–20’, *StEv* 2 (Berlin, 1964), pp. 281–82; and Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970, pp. 99–108; and R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom and the Son of Man* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 68–90.

<sup>15</sup> See Hubbard, *op. cit.*, p. 67, n.2. for further references.

<sup>16</sup> T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London, 1973), pp. 238ff.: and Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, *Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford, 2, 1910), para. 120.

<sup>17</sup> M. Black, cited by Malina *loc. cit.*, p. 90. Cf. R. R. de Ridder, *The dispersion of the people of God* (Kampen, 1971), p. 184.



unemphasized, and as a result some have suggested the word 'go' is better left untranslated.

If these observations are correct, then two implications follow: first, the Eleven were not disobedient to this word by remaining in Jerusalem after Pentecost and making disciples. If the going is not to be emphasized then the important thing for the Eleven was to make disciples, wherever they had opportunity to do so. Teaching men and women in Jerusalem about Jesus as Lord and Christ, and what it meant to obey his commandments were a fulfilment of this commission from the risen Lord.

Secondly, if the commission to the disciples is applicable to the 20th century (and this point has yet to be established) then it ought not to be restricted to missionaries. If 'the going' is unemphasized and 'the making disciples' receives the stress then clearly this will have reference to Christians generally. The terms '*missionary* commission' or '*missionary* mandate' unnecessarily limit the meaning of the phrase. The term 'Great Commission' is apt, provided this is understood to refer to bringing men and women to submit to Jesus as Lord, to become his disciples, *wherever they may be*.

ii. *Who are 'all the nations'?* New Testament scholars are divided as to the meaning of this phrase. There are, basically, three views: (a) that 'all the nations' is a general expression meaning 'everybody' and that particular contexts determine its scope. Accordingly, it has been suggested by D. W. B. Robinson that the p.262 phrase designates Jews of the Dispersion, those scattered among Gentile nations. The Commission of [Matthew 28](#) is simply an extension of the original commission of the Twelve in [Matthew 10](#) (which was to Jews)—this time to all Jews.

(b) The second view is to interpret the phrase 'all the nations of all Gentile nations'—the whole world minus Israel. D.R.A. Hare and R. Walker have presented this position strongly, arguing that [Matthew 28:19](#) is consistent with the rest of 'the First Gospel (which) ... assumes the abandonment of the mission to Israel'<sup>18</sup> According to the latter, Israel is rejected; the last word has been spoken to the Jews at [Matthew 28:15](#). The time of the mission to Israel (cf. [10:5–6](#)) has come to an end and in its place is that to the Gentile nations. But Hare's and Walker's reconstructions of Matthaean theology in general are unconvincing whether or not their understanding of 'all the nations' in this text is correct.

(c) Although *ta ethne* (= 'the nations') is found on all eight occasions in the First Gospel with reference to the nations minus Israel ([4:15](#); [6:32](#); [10:5](#), [18](#); [12:18](#), [21](#); [20:19](#), [25](#)), a strong case can be made for understanding the four occurrences of *panta ta ethne* (= 'all the nations') as designating all without distinction, i.e., Jews and Gentiles.<sup>19</sup> At ch. [25:32](#), perhaps the clearest reference, in the parable of the Last Judgement 'all the nations' are gathered before the Son of Man. The judgement scene is clearly an universal one. It will not do to assert with Walker that the judgement of Jews is already over. The only distinctions drawn in the passage are between the righteous and the guilty, between those who inherit the Kingdom and those who depart from the King.

At ch. [24:9](#) the words, 'You will be hated of all nations (*panta ta ethne*) for my sake', drives home the same point. Indeed, the Matthaean account, if anything, makes the Marcan parallel ('you will be hated by *all*', [13:13](#)) more explicit by the addition of 'nations'.

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<sup>18</sup> D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 147f.; and more recently Hare and D. J. Harrington, "Make Disciples of all the Gentiles" (Matthew 28:19), *CBQ* 37 (1975), pp. 359–69; of R. Walker, *Die Heilsgeschichte in ersten Evangelium* (Goettingen, 1967), pp. 111–13.

<sup>19</sup> Trilling *op. cit.*, pp. 26–8, has argued along these lines, and he has been followed by Hubbard, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–87. In our view Hare and Harrington's article has not effectively answered Trilling's arguments.



Neither Jews nor Gentiles are excluded from the expression, nor is a contrast between the two possible. p. 263

In v. 14 of ch. 24 reference is made to the Gospel of the Kingdom being preached throughout the whole world as a 'testimony to *all nations*'. It seems best to regard this as an all-embracing expression, the more so since the related phrase of this verse, 'throughout the world', suggests universality.

Two further arguments may be adduced in support of the view that [Matthew 28:19](#) is referring to all nations without restriction.<sup>20</sup> First, Matthew in earlier sections of his Gospel has prepared the way for this universal missionary theme. He has done this by his use of the word 'world' (*kosmos*). In the interpretation of the parable of the weeds, Jesus explains that the 'field is the world' ([13:38](#)). The term indicates an unqualified universalism including Jews and Gentiles alike. A similar use of 'world' occurs at [26:13](#) and [5:14](#). A formula quotation ([12:18-21](#)) shows up Matthew's universalism again, while the story of the Magi ([2:1ff.](#)) points proleptically to the widening of the people of God to include all peoples.

Secondly, we note that in the Old Testament there are some significant uses of the phrase 'all the nations'. At [Genesis 12:3](#) the covenant promise runs: 'I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves'. 'All the families of the earth' is not quite the same expression. But in [Genesis 18:18](#) and [22:18](#) where the covenant promise is reiterated the Septuagint uses *panta ta ethne* ('all the nations'), the same expression as in [Matthew 28](#). The covenant promise made to Abraham finds its fulfilment in these magnificent words of the risen Lord Jesus, and this squares with Frankemöeller's conclusions that the Gospel as a whole is a confirmation of God's covenant with his people, both Jews and Gentiles, through Jesus.

iii. *What is the meaning of discipleship?* The authoritative command of the risen Lord in [Matthew 28](#) is to 'make disciples' of the nations. The verb used, *matheteuo*, is a distinctive feature of Matthew's account and corresponds to 'preach' (*kerusso*) in the parallel 'mission' texts ([Mark 16:15](#); [Luke 24:47](#)) as well as in the other 'universalistic' passages of the Synoptics ([Mark 13:10](#) and parallels; [Matthew 24:14](#)). The verb employed in our text is more p. 264 specific than 'preach' since it signifies the purpose of the activity. Its meaning, as with many other terms in the Great Commission, may be gleaned from other references in the Gospel ([13:52](#); [27:57](#): together with the cognate noun 'disciple').

Indeed, the word 'disciple' is one of a cluster of terms which<sup>21</sup> refers to those who follow Jesus: e.g., 'little ones', [18:6](#), [10](#), [14](#); 'brothers', [5:22ff.](#); [18:15](#), [21](#), [35](#); [23:8](#); [25:40](#); [28:10](#); cf. [12:46-50](#); and 'sons' (of God, [5:9](#); of the Father in heaven, [5:45](#); of the Kingdom, [13:38](#)). Of particular importance to the First Gospel is the *understanding* of the disciples. Although the disciples on many occasions are no better than the crowd, because they fail to perceive what Jesus is saying, they are given understanding by him as their Teacher (cf. [16:5](#) and [12](#)). Such insight and understanding are directly related to his teaching (often after he has taken them aside and spoken to them privately, [17:13](#)), and stands in contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees ([16:12](#)). The mark of the disciples is that they are hearers of Jesus' message (cf. [5:1-2](#); [13:10](#) and [16](#); [16:24](#); [24:3](#)).

For Luke the *apostles* are witnesses to all that Jesus did in Judea and Jerusalem ([Acts 10:39](#)), especially the resurrection ([1:22](#)). They are primarily *eyewitnesses*. For Matthew, however, the *disciples* are men who have heard and understood what Jesus taught during his lifetime—they are *earwitnesses*.

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<sup>20</sup> So Hubbard, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-6, whose argument is followed here.

<sup>21</sup> Note the particularly helpful article by U. Luz, 'Die Juenger in Matthaeus-evangelium', *ZNW* 62 (1971), pp. 141-71.

Discipleship is not restricted to the Twelve. It includes them but it takes in a wider group as well. If disciples are those who hear and understand the commands and teaching of Jesus so it can be said that they do the will of God (cf. [12:46ff.](#)), then clearly it is not limited to the early apostolic group. In Matthew's Gospel there is a stress on the Twelve and other disciples being linked, joined together in their obedience to the teaching of Jesus. The term 'apostle' which would separate the Twelve from others (quite legitimately so in some contexts) is avoided in Matthew except for one reference—the list of chap. [10:2](#). There are disciples at all times, and although the Twelve on occasion are a paradigm for other followers, a type of what true discipleship should be like, they are at one in *hearing* the teaching of Jesus. p. 265

Thus the injunction of the risen Lord in [Matthew 28](#) is to make disciples of the nations. Remarkably enough, this authoritative word is addressed to the eleven *disciples* (v. [16](#)), not to the eleven apostles, though the latter term might well have been used. The Eleven are to make men and women as they themselves are.<sup>22</sup> Those who walked with Jesus for three years, receiving his instruction, listening to his commands, obeying God's will, now have the privilege of making other disciples. The link between the two could not be stronger.

iv. *How are disciples made?* If the above ingredients belong to the essence of discipleship how are the Eleven to make other disciples? How can people who have not walked with Jesus be put on the same footing as those who have? By what means will they become *earwitnesses* and then do the will of God?

The structure of our text is clear. 'Making disciples' is the principal verb of the sentence (vv. [19, 20a](#)). The means by which this is achieved is expressed through the two participles that follow: (a) 'baptizing them', and (b) 'teaching them'. Without looking in any detail at the vexed question of baptism—for there are many issues that one might take up—one simply notes that in this context although the term may have several nuances one thing it must include, in our view, is the notion of submission.<sup>23</sup> It is the risen Lord who gives the command. Men are to submit to him, to become his disciples. Anything less than this is entirely unworthy of the person to whom all authority has been given. Baptism has to do with submission—either as a mark of submission, or the submission itself.

The second means by which disciples are made is through their being taught to observe the things Jesus has commanded. This is how (note the repeated 'them') they are to become *earwitnesses*. In Matthew, teaching is an important activity of disciples ([5:19](#); and [13:52](#) where the same verb 'to disciple' is used). Here it is the instrument by which other disciples are made. The content of the teaching is the *commands* of the earthly Jesus, an expression which links the past with the present, so that disciples of later generations p. 266 are put on an equal footing with the Eleven. Trilling<sup>24</sup> has pointed out that the expression 'all that (I command)' is frequently found in the Pentateuch, esp. Deuteronomy, to designate the challenging and authoritative will of God ([Exodus 29:35](#); [Deuteronomy 1:3, 41](#); [12:11, 14](#), and esp. [7:11](#), where the same verb 'command' is employed). Five of the Old Testament commissioning narratives<sup>25</sup> examined refer to the observance of all that God has commanded and the wording of four of them is similar to that of the Great Commission: [Exodus 7:2](#); [Joshua 1:7](#); [I Chronicles 22:13](#); and [Jeremiah](#)

<sup>22</sup> As Karl Barth correctly put it, 'An Exegetical Study of [Matthew 28:16–20](#)', in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. G. H. Anderson (London, 1961), p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> I am indebted to my friend and colleague, Dr. W. J. Dumbrell, for this suggestion.

<sup>24</sup> Trilling, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Hubbard, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–2.

[1:7](#). In this context, Jesus is the authoritative Lord whose commands are to be kept, the content of which may be discerned from the rest of the Gospel

(c) *The word of assurance: the presence of the Lord* (v.[20b](#)). The Great Commission concludes with the promise of the risen Lord's presence to the close of the age. The reassurance of the divine presence (e.g., 'I am with you', or 'certainly I will be with you') was a regular feature of the Old Testament commissioning narratives (e.g., [Genesis 17:4; 28:15; Exodus 4:11–12; Joshua 1:5–6, 9](#), etc.) when God assured his servants that his help and assistance would go with them as they carried out his appointed tasks. Here Jesus is depicted as giving to his disciples that same assurance through his active, dynamic presence that God gave in the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup>

But this word concerning the divine presence, while read against the background of the Old Testament, needs to be interpreted in the light of the Gospel as a whole. At the beginning of Matthew the 'God-with-us' theme is decisively spelled out ([1:23](#)) and it is reiterated in our passage. A similar notion is stated at ch. [18:20](#) where Jesus is present in the midst of his people (cf. [26:29](#)). Several recent writers, particularly Frankemöeller, understand the First Gospel as the fulfilment of the Old Testament covenant, the epitome of which is the Lord's presence with his people. [Matthew 28:20](#) which climaxes the Gospel may thus be regarded as the renewal of the covenant through Jesus. It is ultimately the fulfilment of the covenant promise to Abraham of [Genesis 12:1ff](#). The p. 267 promise of the divine presence, given to the Eleven specifically, is by implication for all disciples, that is, for those who submit to the risen Lord and keep all that he has commanded.

Such an interpretation squares with the final phrase, 'always, to the close of the age'. 'Always', which translates the Greek *pasas tas hemeras* (lit. 'all days'), occurs only here in the New Testament and specifies the duration of Jesus' presence. The apocalyptic phrase, 'to the close of the age', is characteristically Matthaean ([13:39, 40, 49; 24:3](#); and [28:20](#); cf. the similar expression in [Heb. 9:26](#)). As a technical term for the end of history, it stems from the Book of Daniel. The horizon is broad, the glance is into the distance. This expression, like the contrasting phrase, 'the foundation of the world', which is frequent in Matthew, fixes a definite point of time. But how near or far the close of the age will be is not mentioned. The emphasis here is rather upon the continual presence of the risen Christ than on any apocalyptic speculation.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

If our exegesis has been correct, then Carey was right in concluding that the Great Commission still had an application beyond the apostolic age. In our view, this point turns on the nature of discipleship (as presented in Matthew) and on understanding the paragraph as a fulfilment of the covenant promises to Abraham. Carey's concern to see men and women from among all the nations become disciples of Jesus the risen Lord was certainly a proper concern. However, when the attention has been focussed on the 'going' rather than upon the 'making of disciples' it has been misplaced. The important point about the Great Commission is that it has to do with bringing men and women to submit to Jesus as Lord, to become his disciples, wherever they may be.

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<sup>26</sup> P. Fiedler, *Die Formel "ung Siehe" im Neuen Testament* (Munich, 1969), p. 52.

# A Glimpse of Christian Community Life in China

*by* JONATHAN CHAO

AFTER THE Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1969), practically all visible forms of religious activity were eliminated from Chinese society.

On the surface it appears as if the Chinese Communist Party has successfully achieved its goal of extinguishing religion from the masses. Post-Nixon-visit tourists confirm that most church buildings in China today are not used for religious purposes but as storage houses or for other similar purposes. We know, of course, that there are two churches open in Peking, one protestant and the other Catholic, but these are primarily for foreign diplomats and guests. We on the outside have often come to assume that the Christian Church in China is practically gone. In so far as organized institutional Christianity as we understand it in the West is concerned, it is swept away by the wind of revolution. We often assume that when the organized church is wiped out, Christianity is destroyed. Various reports coming from China tell us that we are wrong in this assumption and that the Spirit of God is able to work mightily among his people outside the historical ecclesiastical structures.

Let me share with you some very exciting accounts of the life of one Christian community as told to me by a Christian businessman now living in Europe. I heard these accounts in September, 1974. I will simply convey to you what he told me in my three-hour interview with him, as I have recorded it in my notebook.

The following account happened in a village in one of the coastal provinces of China. The time of this man's visit was early spring, 1974, and the duration of his visit was two months. A [p. 269](#) large part of his family still lives in China, and this visit was just one of the occasional visits he makes back to his homeland.

## LOCAL MEETINGS

According to this man, Christians in his village meet quite often, though not always at regular intervals. Whenever a lay preacher is available, they will gather themselves in a certain believer's home. Biblical exhortations and sharing of the wonderful works of God among them constitute the main thrust of their meetings and are followed by prayer. But as soon as that particular lay preacher has finished speaking, he is escorted to the next village or town. The reason for this is that if a local communist cadre comes and discovers an outsider speaking, hence propagating the Christian faith, difficulties might result for the preacher. But if the cadre finds only local Christians meeting—communist cadres know the Christians often do meet together—he will not do anything. This seems to indicate that it is permissible for a Christian to hold his faith, and even for a group of Christians to hold their private meetings, but that it is unlawful for them to propagate their faith.

(Another report which I received last year indicated that Christians in another place meet secretly by going to a private home late in the evenings and arriving separately. This would indicate that Christians meeting together is now an 'open secret'.)

Who are these preachers? I wanted to know. I was told that they are lay preachers, Christians who also engage in regular production labor. But because they have developed their spiritual gifts, are strong in the faith, and are a help to the other believers, they are

often asked by various local Christian groups to speak to them, especially during off-farming seasons. Other Christians who have mobile vocations, such as doctors, also engage in what we might call 'trans-village evangelism'. Not a few have devoted themselves to full-time ministry by relying on the free-will offerings of the believers for their livelihood. I asked him, 'Is that possible—for a man not to engage in communal production?' He said that it is possible, because they are cared for by the rest of the believers. These lay preachers are also careful not to be p.270 caught by local authorities, but if they should be they are always ready to accept the consequences.

Average attendance in this businessman's village—which has 300–350 families—is about 100 persons. It is his opinion that if all the existing church buildings in China were to be allowed to be used again and all the Christians permitted to worship openly, the buildings would not be sufficient to contain all the believers. Each village and town has its own Christian group. Only members in each local group know each other as Christians. Local communist officials also have a list of the Christians and a file for each believer.

Normally, Christians in one village or town would not know the identity of the Christians in another village, or their meeting place. There is no provincial or national organization linking one group to another. A few of the traveling lay preachers and other Christians who have mobile occupations know the leader in other nearby groups. Some of the leaders know other leaders in their neighboring villages, but not too far beyond.

## RETREATS

Perhaps the most incredible account is that of the retreats which Christians in that village hold from time to time. This particular community holds three seasonal retreats a year, attended mostly by young people. His children told me that in the home meetings they have to sing in a semi-suppressed tone. But at the retreats, which are usually on the top of a remote mountain, they can sing out loud, and they really enjoy that. I asked how long these retreats last and what else they do at them. I was told that the speakers give Biblical expositions. They also pray. Most of all they just enjoy being with other Christians in the open on the mountain top. The retreat lasts about one week and is attended by 60–70 people.

Besides these retreats, neighboring Christian groups get together once a year (also on top of a remote mountain) for a week of training. Each time this meeting is in a different place. As the Christians climb upward and take midway rests, they often meet other fellow climbers. Although they may suspect them to be Christians also, probably going to the same place, they do not p.271 utter a word to each other. Only after they have all reached the same destination do they openly acknowledge each other as Christians. During the days of their meeting, scouts are sent to the surrounding region as lookouts. Usually about 60 persons attend these annual training retreats, where they receive Biblical exposition and learn the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

This kind of secret rendezvous is quite common to the Chinese. Traditional China had its secret societies, both religious and political. Even in modern China, the revolutionaries trader Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese communist movement before and during the Sino-Japanese war, and the Kuomintang agents under the Japanese rule, all operated in this manner. Now it seems to be the Christians' turn, though the situation is not one of hostility.

## CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES



According to my informant, most local communist cadres are quite friendly to the Christians. Christians work hard, are faithful in their labor production, and live honest and exemplary lives. These are also communist socialist ideals, and so the Christians often win the respect of their local authorities. When pressures from above come to the local cadres to implement a certain nationally promoted movement, of which there are many, they simply tell the Christians to play down their activities. But after the movement is over, the cadres return to their policy which has been described as 'opening an eye and closing an eye'.

Not a few of the cadres are Christians. They are often among the most qualified ones to be in charge of local production units and so are often elected by the villagers according to their records of production and general qualifications. This has, of course, very far-reaching implications for the development of the Christian community in that area. One of the advantages of being a cadre is that wherever he (or she) is transferred he will have access to the files on local Christians. The number of Christian cadres is increasing.

In other cases, perhaps, a cadre's mother has become a Christian and for her sake he has to be 'soft' on the local Christians. Many people become Christians through the family circle, and non-Christian cadres are not immune from his pattern. [p. 272](#)

## **CHRISTIANS IN CHINA**

I asked what would be the distinguishing characteristics of Christians in China today. My informant replied: 'They are fervent, faithful, and full of joy and love. They really love one another, and they have a very genuine faith.' It is this love for one another that causes many a non-Christian neighbor to inquire into the nature of their faith. It is the radiant joy which they manifest in their lives and which shines from their faces that makes others wonder what it is that has made them the way they are. They reply, 'Because we believe in Jesus, and it is he who gives us joy and peace. if you believe in Jesus you can have the same joy in your heart.' So it is that Christians in China do not need to go out of their way to convert others; non-believers, seeing something desirable in their lives, want Jesus for themselves.

Many young people turn to Jesus, my friend's grown-up children told me. They know what it costs to become Christians. But they do not mind. In fact, during the Cultural Revolution, when things appeared chaotic, as though there were no government in power, many young people became Christians. In the midst of this chaos, when students had no school to return to for three or four years, everyone did his own thing. An old pastor even conducted an evangelistic meeting in the open air. He asked his son-in-law to prepare a tent big enough to hold 200 people. But some 500 came!

## **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

This man's account has been the most vivid among all the other fragmented reports I have heard so far. Of course, this is only one report from one village, and we must not generalize it to represent the situation of the Christians in China as a whole. China is large and diversified. But when it is placed within its proper historical context, especially within that of the history of the implementation of communist religious policy in China and compared with earlier reports, this account shows a progressive toleration of Christian activities on the part of local communist authorities. For this we can give thanks to God. [P. 273](#)

It seems that the Spirit of the Lord is doing great works among the Christians within China, many of which are simply unknown to us. Perhaps it is not even necessary for us



to know, lest we abuse that knowledge to their harm. But this account is sufficient to shatter our distorted and often preconceived image of a weak and suffering Church in China. No doubt there are great incidences of suffering. But after some twenty years of suffering, the Christians in China have been granted the supreme privilege of experiencing the power of the resurrection in a most authentic, personal, and communal manner by our risen Lord.

God, in his incomprehensible way, and even by the hands of the atheistic communists, has liberated the Chinese Church from her former weights of Western traditionalism, divisive dogmas, hardened structures, and fragmented denominationalism. Stripped of these external weights, she has learned to look only to Jesus and patiently run her heavenly race in this world as a good citizen of the People's Republic of China. As an institutionless community of the redeemed, she has become a sign of hope to those in despair. Seemingly restricted, she probably enjoys more spiritual freedom than most of us care to admit.

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## **The Case for Non-Formal Education (I): Theological Education by Extension Tee Service or Subversion?**

*by* F. ROSS KINSLER

### **INTRODUCTION**

THE EXTENSION program of the Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala is now in its 15th year. The program has grown, stabilized, made many adjustments. The infra-structure needs strengthening; the curriculum is being revised; most of the instructional materials should be reworked. But the results of these 15 years are overwhelmingly positive—at least in terms of traditional expectations. On completion of the current academic year (November, 1977) there will be a total of approximately 85 extension graduates, of which 45 are serving full-time as pastors and church workers (not yet ordained); another 15 occupy important leadership positions in their congregations and presbycrites as laymen, licensed preachers, or ordained pastors; 10 others are pastors and outstanding leaders in other churches here in Guatemala or in other countries. Current enrollment stands at about 250 students in 20 extension centers scattered around the country; efforts are being made to expand into three major Indian areas plus two frontier situations with the help of volunteer adjunct professors. During this 15-year period a total of about 1000 students have participated in some course of study—in a national church which has about 20,000 baptised adult members, 90 organized churches, and 300 congregations.

Yet there is still strong opposition to the whole idea of theological education by extension right here in Guatemala among some of the most outspoken and powerful

leaders of the Presbyterian Church. They no longer attack the extension program directly; they have to concede what it has achieved. But they insist that the Seminary should reopen its residential program to meet the p. 275 priority need for 'adequate' preparation for those who are 'really' called to 'the ministry'. We have pointed out that the Seminary's previous full-time residential program reached only 264 students during its 25-year history, that just 52 were graduate and only 15 are currently serving the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala, 6 of them as full-time pastors. Nevertheless, these pastors of the old guard persist in their 'high' views of the ministry; they insist that pastors need special, separate training. They fear that extension is weakening the ministry and undermining the Church.

We have chosen here to deal directly with this question: Is theological education by extension a significant service to the Church or is it a subversive threat to the Church and its ministry? In this study we shall try to deal with the complaints and analyze the on-going opposition to our extension program in Guatemala. But we shall also refer to the extension movement in general, which continues to experience varying degrees and kinds of resistance around the world.

In a recent conversation with the executive secretary of an association of theological schools, he expressed surprise that we still face opposition here in Guatemala after 14 years of extension and noted that in other places there now seems to be no conflict. My response was to point out that there are serious differences between the advocates of extension and residential training, that ecclesiastical structures and hallowed traditions are being challenged, that conflict and controversy may in fact be good signs. If, on the other hand, extension is easily incorporated within the established system—as training for 'laymen', for those who cannot get to a 'real' seminary, or for 'lower' levels—perhaps no essential changes in the *status quo* are taking place.

Orlando Fals Borda, a brilliant Colombian sociologist and Presbyterian elder, has recommended the recuperation of subversion as a useful, dynamic concept. Given the unjust, exploitive socioeconomic-political structures of Latin America, any move to help the poor gain basic rights, land, or power is labeled as subversive. We may argue in a similar way that the churches in Latin America and elsewhere are dominated by the clergy, by ecclesiastical structures that place power and privilege and initiative in the hands of a few, and by inherited or imported patterns of theological education, and ministry that stifle indigenous, popular leadership. p. 276 From this angle, too, we must raise the question as to the role of theological education by extension. Should it merely serve the given structures and vested interests of the established system of the ministry? Or should extension subvert those interests and structures?

The following paragraphs suggest some ways in which the extension movement may provoke radical change, not to destroy the Church or its ministry but rather to undermine its perpetual tendencies toward hierarchization, legalism, traditionalism, dead orthodoxy and unfaith. This kind of subversion, it will be argued, is healthy and necessary. It is dynamizing. It will most probably, as we have seen in Guatemala and elsewhere, occasion opposition. Theological education by extension may in fact render its greatest service to the Church and its ministry by challenging existing structures.

## I. HOW SHOULD WE CONCEIVE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

The opposition to extension here in Guatemala and elsewhere seems, in the first place, to be built on a certain vision of what theological education should be. We really need to take seriously the ideals and the reasoning that make up that vision, the concerns that lie

behind the complaints, and the important issue of academic excellence in ministerial training.

The traditional vision of what a seminary should be continues to carry considerable weight in some circles. Our older pastors, especially, would love to see even a tiny group of bright, dedicated young men at the seminary full-time, living in special dorms, attending classes daily, spending long hours in the library and with their professors, and enjoying a close fellowship of worship, work, and recreation. If they have offered their lives in service to God, it is reasoned, they should be given the best opportunity to prepare themselves. If they have their whole lives before them and are to serve full-time in the ministry, the Church can well afford to give them three years of full-time preparation. Extension training, which is part-time, often sporadic, tacked onto the daily routine of work and home and Church activities, can hardly be an acceptable substitute. These doubts about extension increase as more and [p. 277](#) more people all around us advance up the educational ladder and as other churches build bigger and more impressive theological institutions.

The desire for academic excellence is certainly worthy of consideration. Our critics believe that full-time, residential training is far more adequate preparation for 'the ministry', i.e. for pastors; they call for upgrading the level of training and tightening or increasing course requirements; they want the seminary to provide a different or at least a longer program for candidates for ordination. In response we have questioned whether academic excellence, as it is commonly understood, is very relevant to the ministry as it really is or as it should be. In Guatemala, most of Latin America, and much of the Third World, schooling is primarily a vehicle of escape from poverty, and it alienates people from their own families, communities, and cultures. The purpose of the seminaries and Bible institutes is to prepare leaders for service among all the congregations, especially among the poor, but we have seen over and over again that they too are instruments of alienation and elitism. Throughout the Third World there is an enormous drive for more schooling, and theological institutions everywhere are moving up the educational ladder. The end of this process is greater specialization and professionalization with abundant benefits for those who reach the highest ranks.

We can never take lightly the intellectual seriousness of our task in theological education, but we must define our objectives in terms of the life and mission of the Church. 90% of the people of Guatemala are extremely poor; 60% are illiterate; and less than 1% have completed secondary school. The Presbyterian Church of Guatemala has many congregations in rural areas where plantation workers earn less than a dollar a day and peasant farmers struggle to subsist on tiny plots of land, in the towns and cities where trade flourishes and artisans and professional people concentrate and Schooling is more prevalent, and among the vast Indian populations where Spanish (the 'national' language) is spoken only by a small minority. No seminary could 'form' pastors for this diverse, growing church; few graduates of traditional seminaries would be able to adapt to the exigencies of most of these situations; most of the congregations will never provide 'professional' salaries. [p. 278](#)

It is our understanding that the congregations themselves can and must form their own leaders and candidates for ordination. The seminary's role is to provide study tools and tutors and to design training programs that will enable these men and women to develop more effectively their gifts, to reflect more critically upon their ministries, and to lead their people in more faithful service and witness. We insist that the seminary must offer functionally equivalent training for the ordained ministry at widely separated academic levels (entrance with primary, secondary, and university schooling); in fact, we are in the process of adding an even 'lower' level in response to obvious local needs.

Similarly we have resisted earnestly all attempts to separate courses for ‘ministerial candidates’ from courses for ‘laymen’ in our struggle to break down the false dichotomy between clergy and laity. Whereas contemporary Western society and Guatemalan education place great value on degrees, levels, faculty, buildings, schedules, we have tried to reverse this process and emphasize growth in service in the congregations.

Although at times—such as annual graduation services—we put on the paraphernalia of *academe* in order to maintain credibility for our program and for our graduates, we are dedicated to the de-institutionalization of theological education. We are looking for new guidelines for academic excellence. Our faculty is not deeply concerned about ‘original research’; we would rather divest ourselves of the professorial image in order to relate with our students as colleagues in the ministry and in theological reflection. We—students and teachers—are not directly involved in international theological debates, but we are all vitally engaged in the problems of our church and in the needs of our people.

Aharon Sapsejian has said that our seminary has ‘committed institutional suicide’. Peter Savage describes this new vision of theological education as ‘pedagogical conversion’. We are in the process of breaking some of the assumptions and subverting some of the pretensions of schools in general and of theological institutions in particular. We are trying to open up rather than close the door to ministry, to challenge rather than discourage people of all ages, levels of schooling, social and economic status, ethnic and racial background to respond to God’s call. This process may also help the churches to throw off the bondage of a professional clergy, the ideology of the middle classes, the legalisms of the past. [p. 279](#) and the cultural forms of a foreign church and an alienated society.

## II. WHAT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE MINISTRY?

The opposition to extension is not merely a criticism of the educational model. It is rooted in and strongly committed to a certain understanding of the ministry. We must explore that concept of the ministry, examine its validity, and ask whether theological education by extension can and should support it.

The idealism surrounding the Presbyterian ministry in Guatemala flows no doubt from several sources: the highly competent, highly motivated, ‘spiritually’ oriented missionary; the all-powerful, authoritative Catholic priest; and the highly visible, outspoken *ladino* leader of plantation, political party, and community organization. A pastor is expected to have above all a deep sense of call, a self-image that places him in a unique sphere of service, dedication, and sacrifice. His integrity and authority should not be questioned. He is the spiritual leader of his congregation, the axis around which the life of the church revolves. The people cannot grow spiritually beyond the level of their pastor. He is the prime mover, orientor, and advisor for all the programs of the church. He is the preaching-teaching elder, who must expound God’s revelation, maintain discipline, and lead the congregation. In the Presbyterian church order a pastor must preside over the local church governing body (the session), and only pastors are authorized to administer the sacraments.

Given this image of the ministry, it was probably inevitable that our extension program would cause not only disappointment but righteous resentment. The image is so strong that some of our extension graduates themselves have joined the opposition, agreeing with the older pastors that extension training is inadequate. At presbytery and synod meetings certain persons have been eager to pick up any indication of incompetence on the part of our extension students and graduates; at last year’s plenary

assembly one of the synod executive officers inadvertently used the word ‘mediocre’. The facts show of course that extension graduates and students now lead most of the churches throughout the whole denomination, including the largest ones, and several p. 280 have been elected as presidents of their presbyteries and of the Synod. But they do not quite fit the idealized image; in fact they unconsciously call into question that very image.

The older pastors feel very strongly that they were called to serve full-time in the pastorate and that anything less is a denial of their calling, even though most of them have not been able to carry out that ideal. They believe that candidates for ‘the ministry’ should abandon secular employment and give themselves wholly and ‘sacrificially’ to theological studies and later to the pastorate. On a number of occasions when the seminary’s report, with its long list of students, has been presented in a presbytery or synod meeting, someone has asked which students are candidates for the ordained ministry, implying that they are the only ones that really count. They want the seminary to provide a kind of training which would make our graduates stand head and shoulders above their congregations—in spiritual power, Biblical knowledge, and theological competence.

This writer, for one, believes that the true role of theological education by extension is not to try to fulfill the expectations of that image of the ministry but rather to transform it. The concept of an omni-competent spiritual leader has no basis in the New Testament, and it has never been effective, at least not in Guatemala. Rather we should seek to build up the ministry of each congregation as a body. The present pattern of authoritarian leadership must be replaced with an emergent, plural, corporate leadership of the people. The ineffectual, top-down style of communication must evolve into an experience of dialogue so that the people can grow in their understanding of the Gospel and begin to relate meaningfully to their own lives and to the needs of their neighbors.

Extension is a necessary alternative for theological training because it enables us to break into the hierarchical patterns of the past, to encourage local leaders to develop their gifts, to allow them to gain recognition as pastors and teachers as well as deacons and elders, and to build a plural, collegiate ministry of the people.

We insist that God’s call to ministry is to all followers of Jesus Christ, corporately and individually, wholly and equally. This approach to theological education may be labeled subversive both p. 281 by its enemies and by its supporters because it does promote radical changes in the nature of the ministry.

### III. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE CHURCH?

The question about the role of theological education by extension goes beyond the matter of educational models and concepts of the ministry to the nature of the Church. The opposition to extension is based in large part upon a set of ideas about the Church, and the legitimacy of extension must be posited in terms of these concerns.

More than 25 years ago Emil Brunner wrote *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, which he called ‘the unsolved problem of Protestantism’. The problem is still with us. The question remains: What is the Church?

The vision, ideals, and concepts of the Church held by our worthy opponents here in Guatemala are not always clear, but the assumptions are none the less definite. There is an easy identification between the true Church and the Presbyterian Church—and other, similar, Protestant groups. The Church consists of those who have ‘accepted Christ’ and become members. The primary dimension of the Church is the local congregation, and the main expression of the life of the Church is cultic. Every congregation in Guatemala meets weekly for an average of six or more worship services, some of them for the expressed purpose of prayer or teaching, one supposedly for youth and another for women, but



almost all follow a stereotyped pattern of hymns, prayer, Scripture reading, and preaching. The Church exists to carry on this routine faithfully and to add as many new people as possible. The local, regional, and national ecclesiastical structures and all the other organizations and institutions of the denomination exist to perpetuate and expand this program.

According to this view of the Church, the seminary is called upon to supply each congregation with a pastor who will carry on the worship services, visit the members so they will not slacken in their attendance, evangelize others so that the membership will increase, and perhaps attend preaching points which will eventually become churches. The seminary should prepare these pastors to strengthen their congregations' denominational loyalty, doctrinal [p.282](#) convictions, Biblical knowledge, moral standards, and organizations.

According to our Reformed tradition the Church is based on the correct preaching (and hearing) of God's Word and administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Presbyterian Churches around the world only ordained, relatively highly educated pastors are authorized to administer the sacraments and preside over the local session, thus constituting the Church in that place. Because of their high calling and training pastors need salaries, and their salaries should in some way reflect their training and calling. In Guatemala and in many other countries this has meant that most congregations could never have pastors, become recognized as 'churches', and be free to develop their own style of ministry and concerns for mission. It has meant that much of the business of the organized churches with pastors and higher ecclesiastical bodies has revolved about the selection and support of pastors.

Now we must ask whether theological education by extension is simply another way of building up this kind of a church with these kinds of institutional concerns. At first glance it appears as if extension does indeed provide many more pastors to carry on these functions and strengthen this concept of the Church. Perhaps many extension programs are doing just that. On the other hand, we believe that extension is beginning to infiltrate these traditions and structures and to lay the groundwork for radical change.

The first step is to ensure that the churches' leadership represents the whole Church, is responsible to the people in the congregations, and does not create a financial burden for the members. Extension allows the congregations to choose their natural leaders as pastors by enabling them to fulfill the academic requirements for ordination. It provides abundant opportunities so that all the congregations can have ordained pastors, either with or without salaries and at all levels of salary.

The second step is to focus the churches' programs on the needs of their people. As we meet with our extension students to study the Bible, Church history, pastoral psychology, etc., we come again and again to the conclusion that the congregations are not meeting the needs of their own members, much less community needs. We know that every home and every individual life has its [p. 283](#) heavy burdens and urgent concerns, its dreams and illusions, but these matters are hardly ever shared or dealt with. The preaching and teaching, the many worship services, and the ponderous organizational machinery continues to proceed unwittingly and unheedingly onward. Now in extension we are sitting down with local leaders and beginning to reflect upon the real and felt needs of our people and to discuss how to meet those needs in the light of the Gospel.

The third step is to introduce changes into the life of the congregations—changes in the regular worship services and other activities, changes in the way the Bible is studied and taught, changes in organization and planning, changes in the ways the members and leaders relate to each other. In the past, our students have complained that in the seminary we discuss great ideas for the renewal and mission of the Church but that in the

congregations and presbyteries these ideas are often squelched. This situation is beginning to change because our extension classes include a broad selection of the churches' leapers, i.e., the people who are capable of making radical changes at the grassroots and at all levels of the church's life.

A fourth step is to restructure the life of the Church and its ministry. This is particularly urgent—in our own situation—for the Indian churches. The Quiche Presbytery has discovered that the congregations that have no trained, ordained, paid pastors are growing fastest. Rather than impose the old structures and standards, they have decided to authorize outstanding leaders to serve the sacraments, ordaining them as local pastors. The Mam-speaking congregations are in the process of forming a new presbytery in which they hope to change the requirements for organizing a church, redesign the ministry according to indigenous patterns, and make the sacraments available to every congregation. The remote Kekchi congregations have been growing very rapidly under local men apprenticed to a wise old leader of the people; they too will soon organize their own presbytery. These exciting developments are not the result of theological education by extension, but extension has helped to shape the thinking that is allowing these basic changes to take place, and it provides the means whereby local leaders can form sound Biblical, theological criteria as they determine their own destiny in the Church. [p. 284](#)

#### **IV. HOW IS THE CHURCH TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION?**

We have followed a logical progression from theological education to the ministry and the Church. Our fourth and final question deals with the mission of the Church. Due to the limitations of this paper we shall not attempt to define the nature of that mission here but rather focus on the instrumentality of mission. In the final analysis the controversy over theological education by extension involves fundamentally divergent conceptions of the way in which the churches are to carry out their mission in the world. Extension leaders must consider whether their task is to support or subvert traditional beliefs about training for ministry for mission.

Ron Frase, a former Presbyterian missionary to Brazil, has written a stunning analysis of ministerial preparation in his doctoral dissertation, 'A Sociological Analysis of Brazilian Protestantism: A Study of Social Change' (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1975). He points out that the Presbyterian Church of Brazil has been committed to a highly trained ministry, that this commitment has produced rigid institutional structures and seriously hampered the church's ability to respond to the Brazilian situation, and that this whole development is the result of a definite missiological concept. In 1847, just a few years before the first missionaries were sent to Brazil, the Board of Education stated succinctly in the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA: 'The basis of all operations of the Board of Education is that a pious and well-qualified ministry is the great instrumentality appointed by the Head of the Church for the conversion of the world.' At that time the Presbyterian denomination had 500 churches without pastors in the USA, and yet it continued to advocate—at home and abroad—a highly educated ministry in the firm belief that Christ himself had appointed these 'ministers' to carry out the Church's mission. Frase comments that other churches were not held back by this concept and by the concomitant structures and thus were able to respond more effectively to the needs of the people both on the US frontier and in the interior of Brazil.

Although they would perhaps not state their case quite so strongly today, the opponents of theological education by extension in [p. 285](#) Guatemala and elsewhere are heirs to this understanding of how the Church is to carry out its mission. This explains

why they fervently defend the traditional, elitist approach to theological education and the hierarchical, professional model of ministry.

A recent event in the life of the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala may serve to illustrate how pervasive and convincing this conception has become. On February 4, 1976 Guatemala suffered its most devastating earthquake in recorded history. 23,000 people were killed; many more were injured and widowed or orphaned; and one million were left homeless or with badly damaged houses. A group of leading pastors and a few laymen in Guatemala City immediately formed a Presbyterian emergency committee (CESEP) to assess the needs and find and distribute aid to the victims, especially Presbyterians. Two missionaries took special interest in the pastors whose manses or homes had fallen, and this became one of the more appealing projects as large quantities of funds began to pour in from the USA and elsewhere. A year after the earthquake, when this committee reported to the plenary assembly of the Synod, they revealed openly and without any sense of wrong that they had distributed \$24,165 among 310 laymen whose homes were destroyed or damaged (average: \$78 per family), \$38,300 to 26 pastors who had suffered losses (average: \$1,473), and another \$30,000 to 6 leading pastors in the capital city area (\$5,000 a piece) who had not lost any property in the earthquake.

The point of this story is that the people most involved in the incident were quite convinced that what they did was right in view of their understanding of the special place and role of the ordained pastor in the Church and in God's mission to the world. At a moment of extreme crisis and vast human need, these pastors could actually improve their lot (\$5,000 is about 5 times as much as an average pastor earns in a year) and accept reconstruction money even if they had had no house of their own. The treasurer of CESEP, one of the most highly respected laymen in the Presbyterian Church and at that time Moderator of the Synod, apparently approved of what happened, although he expected nothing for himself. Missionaries helped get the money and co-operated with the emergency committee; the liaison person in the USA approved the budget; and the donors in the USA were eager to help the pastors. Even the representatives of the churches at the p. 286 recent Synod meeting raised few questions and did not censure the members of CESEP, although they knew that many of their members had suffered great losses and had been given much smaller amounts of aid, if any, by this committee. The only possible way to contemplate this whole affair is to recognize that the ordained ministry is conceived of as the great instrumentality 'appointed by the Head of the Church to carry out God's mission in the world'. Within this frame of reference, what happened was not only justifiable but probably inevitable.

According to this 'elevated' concept of the ministry, the churches should do everything within their power for the preparation and support of their pastors. Seminaries are sacred places, seed-beds for the formation of God's chosen servants. It is easy to see why theological education by extension is depreciated and rejected by many. But by the same token it is easy to see that extension has great potential for radical change not only in the ministry but also for the renewal of the churches for mission. It may also be argued that the church's mission in the world will always be gravely distorted unless the members in the churches, the whole people of God, are given access to theological education and the ministry.

The Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, with almost 15 years' experience of extension, has barely begun to challenge the old structures of the ministry and to change the churches' understanding of mission. But now 250 people representing the whole spectrum of the churches' membership study theology each year in the context of their own homes, congregations, and communities—instead of 10 or 15 privileged youth set apart at a seminary campus. Probably 75% of these students have no intention of

becoming ordained pastors, but they are eager to study in a system which offers no relief from the demands of daily life and employment, and they expect to serve their congregations voluntarily the rest of their lives. At least 50 students are Indians, second class citizens in a country which is striving to obliterate their languages and cultural values through 'social integration'. Perhaps another 50 are women, members of a church that deprives them of ordination as either pastors or elders, which means that they are disenfranchized from the entire ecclesiastical governing structure. The great majority represent the poor and could never attend a traditional seminary. p. 287

We readily confess that there are still major gaps in the curriculum, instructional materials, personnel, and organization of our extension program, although we know it is superior to the earlier residential program. And we hesitate to guess what will be the future shape of the churches' ministry, although we know the options are now much greater than they were. We strongly believe that the Seminary is now serving the churches and strengthening their ministry and mission by breaking out of the confining, debilitating patterns and concepts of the past.

## CONCLUSION

Change is always difficult, especially in the realm of religious beliefs and ecclesiastical structures, above all in relation to the ordained ministry, due to aged traditions, vested interests, established patterns of dependence, and sacred taboos. Many a discussion of critical issues has floundered or been dismissed by a simple reference to 'the call' or by an appeal to the sacrifice, dedication, or spirituality of 'the ministry'. The extension movement here in Guatemala and elsewhere has taken on a task which is difficult and complex, for it is attempting to revolutionize not only theological education but also the ministry, the Church, and its mission in the world. The outcome—after almost 15 years—is by no means certain.

We have suggested that this task may be understood as subversion. The word 'subversion' usually carries very negative overtones; it means to undermine or to overthrow. It may, however, be used to refer to a positive, dynamic process of renewal and transformation from within. Another word that has been used in recent years to express the same fundamental concept is 'contextualization'. The concern of theological educators in many places is to liberate our institutions and churches from dysfunctional structures in order to respond in new ways to the Spirit of God in our age and in our many diverse contexts. Theological education by extension is a tremendously versatile and flexible approach to ministerial training; it is also now a spreading, deepening movement for change, subversion, and renewal.

More questions than answers are evoked by this paper and by the extension movement. Can we finally abolish the persistent p. 288 dichotomy of clergy and laity in our many ecclesiastical traditions with the help of theological education by extension? Surely there are not two levels of calling or service in the ministry? Is ordination, as it has been practiced over the centuries, really valid? Perhaps there should be a parity of ordination or one basic ordination among deacons, elders, pastors or priests, and bishops. Or perhaps every adult Christian who is willing to serve God's purposes should eventually be ordained for ministry. Why is there such a great distinction between Christian education and theological education? It seems from the perspective of theological education by extension that there should be a progressive continuum of service and preparation in ministry in the context of the local congregation and society. How can the churches employ pastors, preachers, administrators, etc., without becoming dependent on them and ruled by them? Paying salaries for full-time work in or for the churches is

not bad in itself; our problems lie in the matrix of theological education-ordination-the sacraments-the ministry-salaries-the professional role. What should be the content of theological curricula if we do decide to subvert the existing structures of theological education and the ministry? We have avoided any discussion of content here, but it could be argued that the medium itself is the most significant message. Our task is to place the tools of theological reflection in the hands of the people of God so that they will be able to clear away the centuries of theological, ecclesiastical, and liturgical residue and begin to theologize, to build a much more vital, corporate ministry, to renew the Church from its roots, to move out in liberating mission to all people.

In this paper we have focused quite specifically upon one local situation, but our concern is for the worldwide Christian movement, which owes so much both positively and negatively to its Western heritage. The writer is obliged to point out particularly that the professional, academic model of the ministry is far more entrenched in his home country and in his own church than it has yet become in Guatemala. The United Presbyterian Church in the USA probably spends \$200 million of its annual income, to support pastors; it contributes \$ 7 million, just 1.5% of its income, for mission and service and ecumenical relations around the world.

Our purpose is not to criticize fellow ordained pastors either in [p. 289](#) Guatemala (or in the USA) or elsewhere. It is rather to call in question the basic structures of the ministry, which we have all accepted and propagated to some degree, and to recommend radical changes. Although we did not build these structures, we—both clergy and laity—are accomplices, and we are all stewards of the Church and its mission under God.

In recent years the churches have raised a prophetic cry for justice amidst the oppressive structures of our societies, and Christians are identifying themselves increasingly with liberation movements. Jose Miguez Bonino (*Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*) and others have suggested that we may have to redefine the Church in terms of these missiological concerns and in terms of para-ecclesiastical or even non-religious groups committed to human liberation. Certainly the churches and their seminaries will have little credibility in today's ideological struggle if they continue to foster elitism and privilege within their own ranks. Theological education by extension opens up an avenue for the churches to transform their own structures, placing power and initiative in the hands of the whole people of God. This in turn may enable the churches to become a servant people, counter communities whose prophetic message is accompanied by living witness and liberating ministry.

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## **The Case for Non-Formal Education (II): Tee in Zaire—Mission or Movement?**

*by* JAMES B. SAUER



IN THE fall of 1973, responding to a seminar led by Dr. Paul White, a group of Alliance missionaries working in Bas-Zaïre launched the first TEE programme in Zaïre for their church. Starting with three centres and 50 students, the TEE movement in Zaïre has grown in four years to encompass 13 of the 53 recognized Protestant churches in the country with 191 centres and 2,661 students. Today, extension students represent the largest single group in Zaïre involved in theological education and pastoral training, and all indices point to the continued expansion of these programmes for at least the next five years. If current growth projections continue, there will be over 3,000 students involved in ministerial training through this non-traditional approach to pastoral training by the end of 1978. At the end of this decade there will be more than 5,000 students.

## **THE EXPANSION OF NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMMES: WHY?**

When one considers this growth factor in non-traditional approaches to pastoral formation, one is led to ask, why has TEE been so enthusiastically received in Zaïre? When one poses this question to leaders of the TEE movement five factors are consistently cited:

- the inadequacy of institutional programmes as vehicles of ministerial formation;
- the high cost of institutional programmes;
- the increasing need for lay training in ministry;
- the need for continuing education opportunities for pastors trained in institutional programmes and now at work in ministry; [p. 291](#)
- the need for literature in the field of leadership development and Christian nurture.

Obviously some of these factors have already been experienced by other programmes. Some of these factors touch only Zaïre's unique situation. But all of them are relevant to the training of ministers in the African context and, I suspect, elsewhere in the Third World.

1. The first factor is the inadequacy of institutional programmes as a means of pastoral training. In the Kasai region of Zaïre there are ten Protestant churches at work. These groups support six institutions of ministerial training on various levels ranging from university level to primary school level. The majority of the people live in rural areas in widely scattered villages, while the pastoral training schools are located in urban areas. Each school is equipped to train approximately 15 students in each year of study, but most schools have less than 35 students in all years. The majority of the students come from rural villages and few return to these villages after their training. Most of the institutional programmes are based on the Euro-American seminary model and demand three to four years of full-time study. Obviously such programmes do not touch the majority of the people and parishes, and the vast majority of the churches are left without adequate leadership. Furthermore, these students, except for rare evangelistic trips, normally do not contribute to or influence the on-going life of the churches during the period of training. If one considers the needs of new churches, preaching points, hospital and institutional chaplaincies, etc. one begins to grasp how woefully inadequate such traditional programmes are in training pastoral leadership for young growing churches.

TEE is in some measure responding to these wider needs, particularly of men already at work in ministry with little or no formal training. Few of the widely scattered rural congregations can ever afford to call a full-time pastor; they have traditionally depended on an evangelist called from the village to lead them in worship and prayer and religious instruction.

2. A second factor influencing the growth of TEE in Zaïre is the high cost of institutional programmes. A recent survey of institutional programmes in the Presbyterian Church

revealed that the average cost per graduate (four years of study) from the p.292 pastoral training school is US\$ 2,762.29. Additionally, in spite of consolidation, cost-cutting and other economy measures, the current inflation index doubles the cost every four years. When considering this cost-per-student figure, one must consider as well that the *per capita* income in Zaire is less than US\$ 100.00 per year. This has forced the overseas church to subsidize institutional programmes at the rate of \$ 2,481.66 per graduate. The Presbyterian extension programme, on the other hand, currently costs \$ 50.00 per student per year. If a student takes a maximum course load, he will take five years to finish the programme for a total cost per graduate of \$ 250.00 with full academic equivalence to the corresponding institutional programme. Furthermore extension students are normally employed and study part-time; they pay more than half of their training expenses, fees and book purchases and their churches or presbyteries pay another 25%. Thus self-support of the programme from local resources is a distinct possibility in the future, while this possibility scarcely exists for traditional, institutional programmes.

3. A third factor contributing to the growth of TEE in Zaire has been the demand of lay people for training. In Zaire, most Protestant communities have not developed extensive programmes of Christian education, leadership development, or other forms of lay training such as Sunday schools. TEE in Zaire is by and large a lay movement. Less than 20% of Presbyterian students intend to seek ordination after their studies. Furthermore, the Presbyterian programme has experienced a unique phenomenon in that several of the students in the programme have returned to their villages to set up 'training centres' in their home churches to share what they have learned. This 'extension of extension' has been one of the most immediate impacts of extension on the life of the Church.

4. A fourth factor contributing to the growth of TEE in Zaire is the need many of our pastors feel for continuing education. Until the present time, most pastors after leaving school have not continued their studies. This has not meant that these pastors have not wanted to study, but opportunities have been limited due to the cost, travel distances, and other factors. TEE provides a local context for continuing education that many pastors are quick to take advantage of. p.293

5. Finally, it has been noted that TEE is also supplying Christian literature in a context where the population is highly literate but sources of reading material are limited. Most programmes report that the demand for books exceeds the supply and the number of students enrolled in the programme. Often books are purchased and used in home study with no intention of enrolling for credit in an extension centre. As a result some programmes have started supplying books to missionary evangelists, the office of Christian education, and others to sell to interested persons. These sales themselves create a demand for more extension centres.

The factors influencing the growth of TEE in Zaire are multidimensional and touch the on-going life of the Church at many points. TEE is a growing edge in ministerial training, while institutional programmes seem to be in retreat or just 'holding their own'. Also TEE is developing in response to the needs of the Church. People are being trained in competent ministry, acquiring both skills and knowledge for ministry.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAMMES AND PROBLEMS

Among the 11 active programmes of TEE in Zaire there is great variety. This is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in that programmes operated at different academic levels tend to reach a large population. It is a weakness in that there is much confusion concerning academic standards and equivalence. Among the 11 programmes, four have university level training available; however, as yet there is no degree or diploma

offered. Five programmes are conducted on the secondary school level, ten on the junior high school level, and six on the primary school level. Most of the programmes are organized to follow the 'standard' TEE format of programmed texts and weekly seminar meetings. One major weakness in the development of TEE is that there is little experimentation in methodology or educational material. For example, only one programme attempts to operate centres on a basis other than the text/meeting format. Only four of the eleven programmes are trying to develop their own materials. Most use translations or adaptations of instructional materials produced outside the country, notably from East Africa. **P. 294**

The main thrust of TEE experimentation comes in integrating TEE into the churches' total theological training structure. Two communities, for example, use TEE as a selection process for their institutional programmes, with one of these going so far as to suppress the first year of study, requiring it to be done by extension. Another church has made TEE the only form of sub-university-level training available, and they have placed the bulk of their limited theological education fund into a university level institution.

There is still a great deal of confusion as to the place TEE occupies in the life of the Church. So far only one programme has considered the problem of ordination. Also the relationship of TEE programmes to existing institutional programmes is very unclear. This has created a climate of mistrust within the theological community, especially on the higher levels. One of the major problems faced by almost all of the programmes is a lack of goal definition. For example, eight programmes have not defined when a student has finished the programme; they operate on a course-by-course basis. The growth of TEE has been so rapid in most cases that there has been a tendency to work for the moment rather than for the future. TEE has a vision of ministerial training, but what is needed now is reflection by the Church at large and by the theological community of Zaire on how to translate this vision into planned goals to meet the needs of the Church.

While TEE does tend to demand less money from abroad for programme support than institutional programmes, most programmes have received less than 30% of their support from local resources. This is a grave situation. At a time when the Church should be discovering ways to lessen dependency on foreign dollars for ministerial formation, there is a tendency to continue the same 'dependency-support cycle' so evident in 'mission churches'. TEE could and should be supported from local resources. With the constantly changing political environment of Africa in general and Zaire in particular, lessened dependency should be a priority in the churches.

This tendency to follow old patterns, coupled with the fact that all programmes are at present directed by missionaries, raises grave questions about the future of TEE in Zaire. Only two programmes even have a schedule for nominating a national director. There is no training programme for TEE leaders, and while most programmes **p. 295** have nationals as teachers, there are two programmes that have only missionary teachers. This has led many to question how indigenous TEE is in Zaire. Some leaders in the theological community have boldly said that TEE is the last retreat of the missionaries and that in TEE the missionaries seek a last haven of control over theological education. Others have more bluntly said that TEE is a missionary programme.

This brings us to the theme of this article: Is TEE in Zaire really a movement or only a mission? If it is a movement, its force, vitality, and direction should come from the people it seeks to serve, and it should contribute to the on-going theological and ecclesiastical life of the church which it serves. If it is a mission, its direction will come from the outside and meet the goals of the expatriates at work in the local church.

We do not yet have the answer to this basic question. Hopefully, as national communication develops in the TEE movement, and as we begin to talk to the larger

theological and ecclesiastical community, we will find the answer. Until we do, the future of TEE in Zaire is tenuous.

TEE appears to be a force which is changing the life of the Church in Zaire. There is new activity in pastoral training and new activity in the churches because of this new approach. There are signs of lay renewal in a clergy-dominated church and a re-awakening of the congregation as a centre of religious life. Certainly these are positive forces coming out of a changing conception of ministerial formation. However the question constantly poses itself in Zaire's dynamic and changing environment: Is this force for change permanent?

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Dr. Sauer has been working as a theological educator in Zaire. p. 296

## **The Case for Non-Formal Education (III): Para-Education: Isolation or Integration?**

*by* JOHN R. PECK

ONE of the great problems attendant on Christians in the present Western world is that the framework of education in which they are brought up is becoming more and more dissociated from Biblical ways of looking at life. It is becoming a commonplace, for example, that the worldview which, since Descartes, has so accentuated the distinction between the world as the object of man's thought and man as the thinking subject, that people find it almost impossible to think about themselves as 'persons' whose body-soul-ness is a unity in the way that the Bible takes for granted. From further back in our cultural history come unconscious attitudes which sharply divide academic and manual work, which dissociate the specialist from the ordinary 'lay' individual. What C. S. Lewis calls the 'magnificent evolution myth' reunites man with the animals, but at the cost of his moral and spiritual identity. Such mental environments have at least two baleful effects: (i) they make the Gospel unconvincing because it is apparently alien to any ordinary framework of accepted thought, so that the evangelistic enterprise is constantly threatened by heresy, and (ii) they make the progress of education in the Christian fraught with intellectual problems which seem to have no solution which is not an escapist one.

### **TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW IN EDUCATION**

It is only comparatively recently that evangelicals have become aware that Scripture offers Christian insights which are a coherent worldview over against those within which our present education p. 297 is being conducted. Such a worldview is a framework within which it may be constructively criticised and against which it might be possible to develop a pattern of knowledge, scholarship and education distinctively Christian. It is no longer possible to say baldly that there is no such thing as 'Christian geography'. There is no such thing as a religious geography, to be sure. But undoubtedly a geography which presents the subject as being merely a matter of physical contours, imports, and exports, is different from one which presents it in terms of human living as it is modified by these

factors. And the intense personalism of the Gospel will, I think, tend to opt for the second as having better priorities than the first. And its attitude towards man's place in the world will resist any theory of the subject which suggests that either aspect was of little real importance in relation to the other.

The obvious answer to this would be the production of an alternative education. But the moment we try to apply the idea, difficulties become apparent. After all, at first sight it appears to have been tried already; have we not had denominational and religious schools? Certainly they have enabled people to be instructed in religious attitudes. But so often when such attitudes have been exposed to the educational process of the outside world at university level they have suffered heavily. They have appeared dogmatically irrational, and irrelevant to the evidence and phenomena with which the world's education is appearing to grapple. Basically, I think the problem has been that such schools have had a touch of what Rushdoony calls 'intellectual schizophrenia'. The religious instruction has been presented alongside educational programmes which were very little different from the world's, based, in an unconscious and uncriticised way, upon presuppositions and assumptions about the nature of life which were not truly Biblical and Christian. But the introduction of religious language no more Christianises an education than plastering my name all over my house proves that I designed it.

So the alternative must be, apparently, to produce a complete educational system based on a Christian worldview, articulated in a philosophy and implemented through a distinctive ideology. It is evident that at present we do not have anything like the expertise to attempt such a monumental task. It is only over the post-war [p. 298](#) decades that we have become aware of what's going on. We might certainly be able to take some cues from the story of the Free University of Amsterdam, but every people has to fashion its own education for its own life-patterns.

## **A MODEST PROPOSAL**

It is in this context that some of us are exploring the possibility of a bridging option—'para-education'. The aim is to offer instruction which will stand alongside a Christian's common education and enable him to react positively and discriminately with it. To the world at large the 'para' prefix will have connotations of irregularity: so be it. Time and eternity will tell. We do not want to stand aside and snipe at the present educational programmes from a superior distance. We expect to learn from them, and incorporate into our own molecular 'ring' (to use a chemical analogy) such elements as are there because we all share the same world made by God, and, however marred, we were all created in the same Image.

This line of thinking has resulted in a teaching venture centred in an old rambling building in the English village of Earl Soham, near Framlingham in Suffolk, which is developing a rather unusual kind of curriculum. For a start, it is planning for week-ends, one a month, linked with home assignments, rather than the conventional terms with weekday lectures and week-ends off. Then again, its staff qualifications are slightly unexpected. The head of the school has a degree in theology, and has also earned his living as a thatcher and screen-printer. Another on the staff has a degree in philosophy, and is a builder and bricklayer. This characteristic permeates the whole teaching body and is deliberate. The idea is to have a two-term 'year'—four week-ends one term, followed by five week-ends the second term, and then, if the way opens, to form another 'year' of more advanced teaching. The first term's curriculum gives an idea of how the programme is designed: six formal sessions to each week-end.

*Week-end 1:*



*Initial orientation:* Seminar on thinking and doing.

*Teaching period:* The nature of the Bible understood from the text itself. p. 299

*Teaching period:* Biblical doctrine of Creation: contrasted with other views of the world.

*Manual experience:* A period of 3–4 hours in which students get experience of some hitherto unsampled manual work in which skill and creativity are possible. But this is to be done with the inculcation of what are seen to be distinctively Christian attitudes towards materials, tools, and products.

*Teach-in:* Christian attitudes towards manual work.

*Worship* (Sunday morning): Teaching period—What is Worship? Followed by an act of worship in church with others in which the principles are explained and exemplified.

#### *Week-end 2:*

*Seminar:* Christian understanding of words and concepts.

*Teaching period:* The authority of Scripture, as conveyed in its own context.

*Teaching period:* Doctrine of man's creation.

*Manual experience*

*Applied subject (teach-in):* Man's commitments in society.

*Worship:* Teaching period—Use of symbolism in worship. Followed by worship service.

#### *Week-end 3:*

*Seminar:* Problems and nature of communication.

*Teaching period:* Issues of canonicity.

*Teaching period:* Man's task in the world.

*Manual experience*

*Applied subject (teach-in):* Industrial life.

*Worship:* Teaching period—Intellective content. Followed by worship service.

#### *Week-end 4:*

*Seminar:* Family relationships.

*Teaching period:* Interpretation and application of Scripture.

*Teaching period:* The Fall.

*Manual experience*

*Applied subject (teach-in):* Caring for children.

*Worship:* Teaching period—Learning to worship. Followed by worship service.

Subsequent terms are planned to develop the programme along similar lines. The teaching periods are intended to expound two modes of thought: one being a philosophy of a Christian worldview p. 300 as deducible from the language of Scripture together with the ideology that could be developed from it. The other would expound the major theological themes of the Christian faith. The manual experience sessions would move from periods in which students get a taste of different forms of craftsmanship to periods of instruction in a particular choice. The applied subject would embrace a wide field of concerns from spiritual counselling, social caring to political activity, economic theory, appreciation of the arts, and so on. The worship teaching is designed to develop along two parallel lines, offering methods of encouraging personal devotion and communicating what might be called practical liturgiology.

## **A RECONCILING PROCESS**

The curriculum itself announces that it can do little more than scratch the surface. The matter is complicated by the fact that there is an intention to search for radically Biblical ways of doing the actual education itself. There is for instance the ideal of a holistic education, in which belief, theory, application and practice are properly reconciled, not just in general principle, but in the actual thinking of the student. There is no great desire to jettison accepted ways of teaching, but there is the desire to harness those methods—and any others that show promise—to aims of reconciliation as well as information. Thus the starting seminar of each week-end is concerned with matters of which everybody has common, often quite unreflecting, experience, with the aim of including students to react to them reflectively in a specifically Biblical Christian way. By the same token, in the manual experience, there is the intention to inculcate deeply personal attitudes towards raw materials and tools and products. The book 'Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance' is a masterly presentation of a characteristically Buddhist version of this. The Christian version actually overcomes the antitheses implicit there, and is badly in need of exposition. This notion, that only in Christ, and therefore only in Christian education, a reconciling process takes place, has other dimensions too: between youth and age, between the layman and the specialist, between management and work-force. This lays special disciplines upon the teacher. Among **P. 301** other things this will force the syllabus to be broad in its scope. For it seems that if it is to be genuine 'para-education' it must exist side by side with the full extent of its counterpart in the world, even though it cannot yet hope to compare with it in depth and volume.

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**The Reverend John R. Peck, until recently, lectured at the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland. **p. 302****

## Book Reviews

### FAITH AND CHURCH

#### **The Book of Deuteronomy**

by P. C. CRAIGIE.

(Eerdmans/Hodder and Stoughton, 1977. Pp. 424, \$9.95/£5.75.)

Abstract of a review by G. J. WENHAM, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, October–December 1977 (Vol. XLIX, No. 4).

CRAIGIE's work on Deuteronomy, the second volume in the New International Commentary series edited by R. K. Harrison, combines erudition with readability, originality with conservatism. The Introduction outlines the historical background in the later 13th century B.C., and compares the form of Deuteronomy with those of Near East treaties; it is felt to be closer to Hittite treaties of the second millennium than to Assyrian ones of the first. Deuteronomy is not regarded as instrumental in Josiah's reformation, while examination of the background of the laws and Near East parallels confirm the absence of anything anachronistic to Moses' time. Moreover, the principal themes of Deuteronomy are exactly those which figure in [Exodus 15](#). The Hebrew text has its own translation

supplied by Craigie, while the footnotes are a mine of information. Not all would agree with the interpretations of the many problems of Deuteronomy given here (e.g. why some animals are 'unclean'), but such observations cannot detract from the greatness of this study of a key OT book.

**A Time To Mourn, And A Time to Dance: Ecclesiastes and the way of the world**

by DEREK KIDNER.  
(IVP. Pp. 110, £1.20).

Abstract of a review by A. GELSTON, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).

It is not always easy to make preaching both strongly Biblical in content and acutely relevant to the modern world. Few preachers would turn to Ecclesiastes as a potentially fruitful source for sermons of this quality, but Mr. Kidner's admirable exposition will stimulate them to do so. Its main emphasis is on the relevance of the questions Ecclesiastes raises to modern life. If much of the [p. 303](#) book's message is an incisive criticism of the secular outlook, surely this is just the kind of pre-evangelism that is needed today. Sound and informed scholarship lies beneath the surface of this lucid and readable book, occasionally coming out in detailed footnotes or judicious evaluations of modern translations, and in the pertinent illustrations from the literature of the Ancient Near East.

**Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8: 17–39**

by D.M. LLOYD-JONES.  
(Banner of Truth Trust, 1977. Pp. 457, £3.00.)

Abstract of a review by N. T. WRIGHT, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).

HERE is another magisterial volume in Dr. Lloyd-Jones' series on Romans. It shares with its predecessors the writer's characteristic strengths: a clear grasp of the overall message of the book, a careful and minute attention to detailed exegesis, and a clarity of thought coupled with the ability to convey those thoughts with power and richness. Dr. Lloyd-Jones knows well that many of the doctrines in this sublime passage have raised enormous questions both in themselves and in relation to other parts of the New Testament, and he consequently includes long sections devoted to doctrinal issues. He often illuminates not only the text under consideration but also other Pauline passages and whole areas of Christian thought and experience. The whole book is itself alight with the sure hope of 'the glory that is to be revealed'.

**A history of interpretation of Hebrews 7, 1–10 from the Reformation to the present**

by BRUCE A. DEMAREST.  
(Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976. Pp. 146, DM 32.)

Abstract of a review by RALPH P. MARTIN, *Themelios*, May 1977 (Vol. 2, No. 3).

THIS exacting piece of research into a *locus classicus* of NT interpretation represents part of the author's doctoral thesis on [Hebrews 7](#) under the guidance of F. F. Bruce at the University of Manchester. The work takes in a meticulous survey of research into this passage from the time of Erasmus up to current discussions on Melchizedek in the light of documents from cave 11 at Qumran. After surveying [p. 304](#) the work of the 16th–19th centuries, the writer warms to this subject with discussion of 20th century scholarship, beginning with the history-of-religions interpretation. Despite an initially generous assessment of this approach, he later suggests that this and gnostic parallels are too late

to have influenced the writer's presentation decisively. Exegetical issues are listed at the outset. Regarding the status of Melchizedek in v. 3, Demarest suggests the author's intention was to emphasize Melchizedek's complete dissociation from the legal, priestly regime. To use his character in a Christological sense is justified and chimes in with the author's purpose to demonstrate the uniqueness of our Lord's priesthood. A detailed foreshadowing of Christ's humanity and divinity was not however intended by the author. More interaction with those whose views he sometimes simply catalogues would have been instructive. This piece of research is a timely warning against the mistakes and aberrations of past interpretations.

### **The Origins of New Testament Christology**

by I. HOWARD MARSHALL.

(Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977. Pp. 132, £1.95 paper.)

### **The Origin of Christology**

by C. F. D. MOULE.

(Cambridge: University Press, 1977. Pp. 187, £7.50.)

Abstract of a review by F. F. BRUCE, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, October–December 1977 (Vol. XLIX, No. 4).

DR. MARSHALL'S guide to New Testament Christology starts with a survey of just over a century's study. He begins with H. P. Liddon's Bampton Lectures for 1866, and then moves to W. Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*. Later works discussed are those of Vincent Taylor, Oscar Cullmann, Ferdinand Hahn and R. H. Fuller. A crucial question in any Christological study is the relation between what was believed by the early Christians and what was believed and expressed by Jesus about himself. Chapter titles include 'Did Jesus have a Christology?', 'Who is this Son of Man?' and 'Are you the Christ?'. The title 'Lord', far from having its roots in the cultic language of Hellenism, was increasingly 'understood in terms of the Old Testament and regarded as an acknowledgement of a status equal to that of God the Father. In the survey and presentation of the subject, Dr. Marshall has shown that he himself has [p. 305](#) special qualifications to help in greater detail with the working out of the truth about him in whom 'God was reconciling the world to himself'.

Professor Moule is convinced that 'there are unexamined false assumptions behind a good deal of contemporary New Testament scholarship'. One of these false assumptions is the 'history-of-religion' school which envisages New Testament Christology as an evolutionary process, beginning with a Palestinian rabbi and ending with the divine Lord of a Hellenistic saviour-cult. To challenge this school one must know what was historically true of Jesus himself. Professor Moule thinks that the Synoptic Gospels are such a source of knowledge. He also takes up the four well-known terms—the Son of Man, the Son of God, Christ and Lord—and examines them afresh in order to see what evidence emerges regarding their origin. The work ends with thoughts on the relation between the ultimacy of Christ in the New Testament and his ultimacy for all time. Professor Moule disclaims all thought of being a systematic theologian; he is primarily a New Testament scholar concerned with the New Testament witness to Christ and its implications.

### **Paul and Jesus**

by F. F. BRUCE

(SPCK, 1977. Pp. 87, £1.50.)

Abstract of a review by BRUCE KAYE, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).

THE traditional antithesis between the historical Jesus as the preacher of the God of love and 'Paul the innovator' preaching a dogmatic Christianity is decisively dispelled by

Professor Bruce. The importance of the difference in time perspectives between Jesus and Paul (the one before and the other after the Crucifixion and Resurrection) is underlined with considerable discussion of [II Corinthians 5:16](#). In this connection, the views of Bultmann and Wrede are taken into account but rejected, and Bruce maintains that the contrast is between Paul's former and present attitudes to Christ, following the translation of the New English Bible. The balance of revelation and tradition in Paul's gospel is discussed and the way in which the teaching of Jesus is incorporated into Paul's writing is examined. The final chapter deals with the origin and meaning of the confession 'Jesus is Lord'. A lucid and concise summary of the principal issues. p. 306

***Wie sicher ist die Zwei-Quellen-Theorie?* (How reliable is the Two-Source Theory?)**

by RAINER RIESNER.

(*Theologische Beiträge*, 8/2 1977. Pp. 49–73.)

A summary by the author.

WHEN in 1838 C. H. Weisse and C. G. Wilke advocated the Two-Document Hypothesis, they did not find many supporters. But the situation changed with the *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*. The Marcan priority became a cornerstone for writing a Life of Jesus. In the last ten years the validity of the hypothesis has been questioned. In synoptic research, statistical observations are important, but inconclusive. For the adherents of the Two-Document Hypothesis the agreement in order remains the first argument. There are other possible explanations based on written tracts and an outline of Jesus' ministry as a separate tradition. Philological, stylistic and other criteria may falsify the hypothesis as in the case of the healing of Peter's wife's mother ([Mark 1:29–31](#)), the question about fasting ([Mark 2:18–22](#)), marriage and divorce ([Mark 10:1–12](#)), the parable of the wicked husbandmen ([Mark 12:1–12](#)). In conclusion, the Two-Document Hypothesis raises more questions than it answers. It is methodologically inadvisable to ground research on only one scheme of synoptic relations. One has to analyse every pericope and every saying separately. Source criticism may not be valid, but tradition criticism remains useful.

**Faith and Reality**

by WOLFHART PANNENBERG.

(Search Press, 1977. Pp. 138, £4.95.)

Abstract of a review by RICHARD GRIFFITHS, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).

This collection of essays must be warmly welcomed. These essays offer a conspectus of Pannenberg's thought linked by a vital theme: How can Christian belief be credible in the modern world? It was this problem which motivated Bultmann's de-mythologisation. However, Pannenberg rejects this procedure. The author defines reality in terms of God's action in history. The resurrection of Jesus, whose reality is defended, is central to this view. A faith and theology that is grounded in the objective realities of historical events can have no time for subjective theories. The book is an p. 307 excellent introduction to a work that may be considered the best alternative to Bultmann's in the realm of history and eschatology.

**Space, Time and Resurrection**

by THOMAS F. TORRANCE.

(Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1977. Pp. 196, £5.00.)

Abstract of a review by MICHAEL PERRY, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).



FOR Professor Torrance, the resurrection is significant, and its intelligibility is guaranteed, because it took place within our world of space and time. The resurrection, in relation to the Person of Jesus Christ, discloses that the Virgin Birth was the act and mode of the Creator's entry into his own creation. Resurrection has to be understood as the redemption of space and time—not their abrogation, but their healing, their re-creation, their restoration. The ascension cannot be de-mythologised—it sends us back to the world of space and time, a world in which incarnation is possible, the world in which God's Word can be implicated in a Space and Time of which Jesus is Lord. The book is tough going; but if we want our faith in the physical resurrection undergirded. Dr. Torrance will do it for us splendidly.

## THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

### The Central Significance of Culture

by FRANCIS NIGEL LEE.

(Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976. Pp. 150, \$3.75.)

Abstract of a review by JOHN W. KEDDIE, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, October–December 1977 (Vol. XLIX, No. 4).

THIS book is an attempt to understand culture from a Biblical and especially a Calvinistic perspective. Dr. Lee has provided a grand survey of the historical development of culture for the first time since Henry R. Van Til published *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* in 1959. The author strives to justify a Biblical (Reformed) concept of culture that is fully theocentric. The five chapters tackle the subject progressively. First, *roots*: God is the author of all true culture and man has an inescapable duty to be involved in it. Secondly, under *growth*, is traced the development of culture p. 308 through the Old Testament. Thirdly, *blossoming* includes a history (necessarily compressed) from the time of Christ to the present, incorporating a discussion on cultural balance, between too this-worldly and too other-worldly orientations. Fourthly, and perhaps central, is the chapter on *fruits*, or the ultimate purpose of culture, with a discussion of the materiality of the life to come and its implications for present cultural activities. Finally, *harvesting* deals with the cultural challenge today, with a Biblical evaluation of contemporary culture, and a plea for Christian activity in every sphere of life. A specifically Christian way must be developed without a synthesis with worldly culture. Despite the somewhat sweeping nature of this survey and a doubtful application of certain Biblical texts, this is a clearly written Christian manifesto for those striving for a Biblical critique of modern culture.

### Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective

by JACOB A. LOEWEN.

(South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1975. Pp. 443, \$5.95 paper).

Abstract of a review by VICTOR OLIVER, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, January 1977 (Vol. 13, No. 1.)

JACOB LOEWEN writes from a far wider perspective than that of the typical anthropologist. At various times the reader gets the feeling that he is learning from a theologian, a psychologist, a missionary, and representatives from other disciplines. His material impresses me as a call to 'application', that is, missionary theory, anthropological insight, and Biblical principles can only be viable and significant as they are applied in the cultural situations of life. Among the presuppositions underlying the articles are: The indigenous culture is not an enemy of the Gospel, Christianity and the Church can take root and

flourish in any and every culture, and the Incarnation is the supreme model of all cross-cultural witness.

### **Mysticism in the World's Religions**

by GEOFFREY PARRINDER.

(London: Sheldon Press, 1976. Pp. 210, viii, £4.95.)

Abstract of a review by LAURENCE E. PORTER, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, April–June 1977 (Vol. XLIX, No. 2.)

THE author of this book, who is Professor of the Comparative [p. 309](#) Study of Religions at London University, makes an attempt to penetrate the mystical phenomenon as manifested by the world's great religions. His starting point is to make a clear-cut distinction between the monistic and theistic types of mysticism. The former type of mysticism seeks identity with the absolute, a universal principle devoid of character. The latter type of mysticism sees God as the Other, and therefore seeks union with him, who is not a characterless being, but is Being who seeks us through his love. The author also makes a comparative study between Christian and non-Christian types of mysticism. He recognises the rich heritage of mystical phenomenon both in the Old and New Testaments, and also throws some light on the mysticism of early monks and hermits, of Spanish and English mystics, German pietists and hymn writers from Wesley to Keble. The author is of the opinion that mysticism is an essential manifestation of a true religion, and he laments the fact that the Church, instead of looking inwards, is engaged simply in intellectual and doctrinal discussions. It is this neglect on the part of the Church which is responsible for the spread of all types of mysticism and occultism especially among the young. The author's standpoint is Biblical. A valuable book for students and ministers.

### **Asian Voices in Christian Theology**

ed. by GERALD H. ANDERSON.

(Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976. Pp. 321, \$17.95.)

Abstract of a review by JONATHAN PARRENO, *Themelios*, September 1977 (Vol. 3, No. 1).

THIS is a compendium of the writings of nine theologians from India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and Japan. It is encouraging in that it could be seen as heralding a break from the 'Teutonic captivity' and 'the Aryan bias of Christian doctrine' among the churches of Asia, breaking a theological dependence as real and as serious as their economic dependence. But ironically the voices are Asian echoes of Barth, Bultmann, Tillich and Niebuhr. There also seems a real risk of making the Asian revolution the focal point of their theology rather than setting the Asian dilemma within the framework of salvation-history. The reviewer selects three themes common to these writings. First, the 'theology of harmony', attempting to syncretise [p. 310](#) Christian faith with other Asian religions. Secondly, the 'theology of incarnation', moulded to suit the existential present rather than being governed by the limits normative to Biblical revelation. Thirdly, the 'theology of liberation', challenging Christians to multifaceted involvement in the revolution. More positively, these voices challenge the Christian to be sensitive to the Asian historical situation, and to beware of a foreign-sounding gospel, especially one which focuses on the needs of the individual to the exclusion of those of society. Above all, these papers expose the lack of conservative evangelical scholarship in the Asian churches.

### **Christians and Marxists: The mutual challenge to revolution**

by JOSE MIGUEZ BONINO.

(London: Hodder and Stoughton: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976. Pp. 160, £2.50/\$6.95.)

Abstract of a review by JOHN P. BAKER, *Themelios*, May 1977 (Vol. 2, No. 3).

BASED on one of a series of London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity in 1974 under the chairmanship of John Stott, this book is a more mature reflection from a Latin American perspective on the possibilities in the encounter between Christians and Marxists by one who is critical of, yet committed to, both. Marxism is examined in all its aspects, as are Christian attitudes, actions and history in the light of Marxist criticisms and also Biblical religion. It is doubtful whether Dr. Bonino's political convictions will be widely accepted without a more thorough grounding of his position in Biblical theology. Though his views may be welcomed in the Third World generally, the reviewer cautions against the Church's alliance with any particular socio-political economic system.

## **CHURCH AND MISSION**

### **Guidelines for Urban Church Planting**

ed. by ROGER S. GREENWAY.

(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976. Pp. 76, \$1.95 paper.)

Abstract of a review by VERGIL GERBER, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, April 1977 (Vol. 13, No. 2).

CHURCH growth specialists are often accused of being long on p.311 theory, but short on practical application. Here is a manual that gets right to the point. Dr. Greenway brings together concrete illustrations from five EFMA-related denominational missions in the form of urban 'models' drawn from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Each of the models contains insights that are transferable to mission programs in other parts of the world. The opening chapter discusses Dr. McGavran's eight keys to successful urban church growth. These are reflected upon in the following four chapters: Howard Snyder on the Free Methodist Church in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Vernon Wiebe in the Mennonite Brethren in Osaka, Japan; Philip Hogan in the Assemblies of God, Nairobi, Kenya, and the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Lima, Peru. The last three chapters are drawn from the work of the Christian Reformed Board of Foreign Missions in Mexico City and Africa. Greenway believes 'cities are the modern frontiers of Christian missions and must be given top priority in terms of strategy and the assignment of resources'.

### **Theological Perspectives on Church Growth**

ed. by HARVIE M. CONN.

(Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976. Pp. iii, 154, \$4.95 paper.)

Abstract of a review by HORACE L. FENTON JR., *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1977 (Vol. 1, No. 3).

WORLDWIDE respect for the Church Growth movement and the need for a sound theological basis to it are evident through this symposium, the contents of which were presented at a consultation on 'World Missions and the Theology of Church Growth' at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1975. Dr. Glasser of the Fuller School of World Mission introduces the Church Growth principles of Dr. McGavran which in turn are taken to task by several Reformed theologians for certain theological shortcomings, but not overlooking their helpful contributions. Such an interaction of views as is found here can only be profitable to the Church Growth movement. Other significant contributors include Edmund Clowney, Jim Packer and Harvie Conn. The whole collection is of importance to

both the promoters of the Church Growth emphasis and those who question its validity.  
p. 312

**The How and Why of Third World Missions**

by MARLIN L. NELSON.

(South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1976. Pp. 248, \$6.95 paper.)

**Readings in Third World Missions**

ed. by MARLIN L. NELSON.

(South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1976. Pp. x, 294, \$6.95 paper.)

Abstract of a review by WALDRON SCOTT, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1977  
(Vol. 1, No. 3).

THESE two books are the linear descendants of earlier attempts to document Third World missions. The first focuses on Asia, and in particular Korea, where the author represented World Vision for 20 years. The material relates missiological principles developed at the Fuller School of World Mission to indigenous Asian missionary societies. Chapter 10 presents the unique features of certain Asian societies—Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese. The companion volume is basically a reprint of earlier writings on the subject, half of them by Asians and Africans, including one woman, Dr. Chun Chae Ok, a Korean with 13 years' missionary experience in Pakistan. An appendix contains an annotated bibliography of 300 books and articles on Third World missions, thus making this volume an important contribution to contemporary missiology.

***Iglesia ni Cristo: A Study in Independent Church Dynamics***

by ARTHUR L. TUGGY.

(Quezon City, Philippines: Conservative Baptist Publishing, Inc., 1976. Pp. xx, 272, Pesos 17.00.)

Abstract of a review by PETER G. GOWING, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1977 (Vol. 1, No. 4).

TWELVE years a missionary in the Philippines, the author is now on the staff of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society in the USA, and has studied the *Iglesia ni Cristo* at close range, its literature, people and functions, and had the privilege of hearing its founder, Felix Manalo (1886–1963) preach in his native Tagalog language. Dr. Tuggy draws on the methodologies of history, anthropology, and Church Growth research, but confesses inability to penetrate the thick security curtain over the *Iglesia's* administration and centralised, authoritarian structure. Much of p. 313 the *Iglesia's* origins are traced in the person of Felix Manalo, who left the Roman Catholic Church, passed through several denominations and sects in quest of religious certainty, before founding a new church, based only on Scripture. With Manalo's charismatic personality, the *Iglesia's* aim of unashamed numerical growth is being fulfilled, now numbering half a million with 2,500 congregations. The *Iglesia* has demonstrated the ability of the nationals to operate and finance their own church. However, the *Iglesia* denies the deity of Christ and affirms that Manalo directly fulfilled the prophecy of [Revelation 7:2–3](#). Dr. Tuggy's study is fair-minded, but does not absolve Manalo from the charge of being self-deluded or disobedient to God.

**A Christian's Response to Islam**

by WILLIAM M. MILLER.

(Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co. 1976. Pp. 178, \$3.50 paper.)

Abstract of a review by JON BONK, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 1977 (Vol. 13, No. 3).

DRAWING upon an in-depth knowledge tempered by over forty years of missionary work in a Muslim country, the author skilfully traces the early beginnings of Islam and provides the reader with a succinct but insightful resume of major differences between Christianity and Islam with respect to the Bible, God, Jesus Christ, man and salvation. The book concludes with sixteen reasons why Muslim peoples should not necessarily be neglected by the Church in favour of greener fields. The reasons are not all of equal merit, but are, on the whole, thought-provoking. It includes a limited but up-to-date bibliography. It is highly recommended to all who are interested in Islam, and would make good supplementary reading for a variety of missions-related college courses.

## **ETHICS AND SOCIETY**

### **A Marxist Looks at Jesus**

by MILAN MACHOVEC.

(Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976. Pp. 231, £2.95.)

Abstract of a review by ANDREW KIRK, *Churchman*, July, 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 3). [p. 314](#)

THE main portion of the book is devoted to two main basic questions: What did Jesus really believe about his particular mission? How was it that the early Church converted the message of Jesus into a message *about* Christ? The Czech Marxist's approach to these two questions is both sceptical and speculative. His conclusion is that the faith of the early Church did not coincide very exactly with the faith of Jesus. Machovec's positions are arbitrary and subjective and spring from a basically rationalistic foundation. For example, his attempt to explain Easter faith without Easter is about as tepid and unconvincing as that of Bultmann and borders on a naive 'psychologism'. However the book is a very great advance on the cheap pamphleteering associated with many Marxist opinions about the significance of Christian faith.

### **The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians**

by IAN BRADLEY.

(London: Jonathan Cape, 1976. Pp. 224, £4.95.)

Abstract of a review by A. G. NEWELL, *Evangelical Quarterly*, July–September 1977 (Vol. XLIX, No. 3).

THE author's concern is with Anglican Evangelicalism between 1800 and 1860. He makes a valiant effort to maintain an impartial objectivity. Thus Evangelicals are said to have held modern liberal opinions on imperialism, benevolent state intervention on behalf of the suffering poor, and the role of women. Equally commendable was their awareness of the manifest unfairness of seeming to attack only working-class vice, their responsibility for the gradual suppression of the well-connected by diligent, incorruptible, bourgeois civil servants and their elevation to the moral level of politics and politicians. The Evangelical charitable society supplied the model for philanthropy in Victorian England. Despite this large and welcome recognition for the Evangelicals' valuable contribution to Victorian society, however, Dr. Bradley's account leans towards all-too-usual distortion. He speaks of Evangelicals' 'vital religion' as simple, emotional and anti-intellectual, virtually limited to the doctrines of total depravity, conversion and sanctification. According to the author, Evangelicalism was 'a puritanical creed, life-denying rather than life-affirming and stressing the negative values of abstinence and self-control rather than the [p. 315](#) positive values of generosity and altruism'. This inaccurate and simplistic definition of Evangelicalism reflects his lack of theological appreciation. However, the



book directs our attention to those great men and women of the 19th century who did so much in moulding the morality of an age.

### **Christian Responsibility In A Hungry World**

by C. DEAN FREUDENBERGER and PAUL M. MINUS, JR.  
(Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1976. Pp. 128, \$2.50 paper.)

Abstract of a review by JOHN F. ROBINSON, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1977 (Vol. 1, No. 4).

FREUDENBERGER writes from the background of an agricultural missionary in Zaire and Minus as chairman of the task force on world hunger of the United Methodist Church. The authors offer in Part I a sociological analysis of the causes of hunger and describe processes of rural development designed to end it, along with Biblical insights into the human quest for food and justice. In Part II they propose guidelines for churches and individual Christians for building a world in which there is bread and justice for all by the end of the century. They recommend heightening people's awareness of the hunger crisis and the way beyond, mobilising church resources towards ending hunger, developing responsible lifestyles, and re-ordering priorities in political and economic institutions. A fundamental thesis is that 'the world's future will be determined by what the well-fed minority does about the fact that most of the human family is hungry'. On the contrary, the reviewer believes that the key to the hunger problem lies not with the rich, but with the poor gaining greater control over their lives and their environment. A change in behaviour is more important than the transfer of resources.

### **China as a Model of Development**

by AL IMFELD.  
(Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1976. Pp. 159.)

Abstract of a review by SAMUEL F. ROWEN, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 1977 (Vol. 13, No. 3).

IMFELD, a Bethlehem Father (a Swiss missionary society), has taught development sociology in several African countries and in [p. 316](#) Switzerland. He states that the following lessons are implicit in China's model of development: 1. All development is political. 2. Development must be related to the needs of the people and cannot be slavishly copied. China can be described as a model for the 'contextualisation of development'. 3. The approach to development by training leaders is doomed to failure. Only in a communal commitment can there be genuine progress. This important short book should be read by those agencies involved directly in development work. Also, missionaries engaged in educational and medical work will profit from the lessons outlined in the book. If one is looking for a critique of China's development philosophy, this is not the book. Imfeld's sympathetic approach underscores the lessons to be learned.

## **PASTORAL MINISTRY**

### **Committed Communities: Fresh Steams for World Missions**

by CHARLES MELLIS.  
(South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1976. Pp. xix, 138, \$3.95 paper.)

Abstract of a review by RALPH R. COVELL, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1977 (Vol. 1, No. 4).

HERE is a book with a focused objective. The author, currently director of the Summer Institute of International Studies and assistant editor of *Missiology*, wishes to uncover 'attractive structures' through which multitudes of mission-minded young people can be channelled into cross-cultural missionary work. His search leads him to examine historical models of committed communities—those task-oriented structures (sodalities) that along with congregations (modalities) constitute, in his view, the Church. After a casual survey of Biblical sources, Mellis describes recognizable models, early monastic communities, Celtic *peregrini*, Dominican and Franciscan friars, Moravians and early 19th century missionary societies. He contends that the centralizing tendencies of modern life have worked against the sense of community with the result that most mission agencies today are 'structured on the business management model'. The remedy is to 'start afresh with a clear and firm premise: that mission sodality is not a business, it is one expression of the Church'. p. 317

**The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist**

by A. SKEVINGTON WOOD.

(The Paternoster Press, 1977. Pp. 302, £4.20).

Abstract of a review by COLLISS DAVIES, *Churchman*, October 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 4).

THE re-issue of this book after ten years makes available a work of mature scholarship. Under the sub-headings 'The Making', 'The Mission' and 'The Message' of an Evangelist, the author highlights the unique contribution of John Wesley to the spiritual life of Britain two centuries ago. Particularly important in these days of theological uncertainty is the author's interpretation of Wesley's doctrinal position. Wesley's clear submission to Biblical authority, his teaching on justification, on sin, redemption and the Holy Spirit, who brings joy, peace and assurance, and his eschatology, is comprehensive yet skillfully composed.

**The Spirit of Solzhenitsyn**

by OLIVIER CLEMENT.

(Search Press, 1976. Pp. 234, £5.95.),

Abstract of a review by NICHOLAS SAGOVSKY, *Churchman*, July 1977 (Vol. 91, No. 3).

THIS is one of those books which makes you break off time and again to savour the insight that it brings. It makes of Solzhenitsyn's massive literary output a cohesive whole, and it shows how he has consistently explored the deepest and most significant issues of our time. It also shows his debt to the Russian Christian writers of the early 20th century. The 'spirit of Solzhenitsyn' is one of resistance to the tyranny of ideology. He speaks for all those who have experienced that 'herald of the twentieth century', the concentration camp. The author shows that Solzhenitsyn's spirituality is both Orthodox and Slavophile in a way that the West can barely understand. This splendid commentary gives us many new insights into Solzhenitsyn's writings.

**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

SOME TEXTS FOR SYLLABI

**The Gospel of Moses**

by SAMUEL J. SCHULTZ.

(New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Pp. 165, \$5.95.) p. 318

Abstract of a review by WALTER C. KAISER JR.

NEW trends in the teaching of Old Testament are reinforced by the timely appearance of this book which, within 165 pages, both covers classroom methodology and includes highlights from OT lectures to college students. Schultz argues for Deuteronomy being the foundation of OT courses, focusing on the 'essence of the written Bible' as an integrating core. Thus aspects of law, history and predictions may be viewed in balance, replacing the traditional domination of a barren historical descriptive type of analysis. This recognises in the text's canonical setting, in its total message, and in the build-up of theology across the pre-Christian era, its own legitimacy, apart from the continued progress of revelation in the New Testament, and the fact that the OT text also addresses us as a word which demands a response. The demands of the Gospel of Christ were basically the same as those in the gospel of Moses.

### **Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective**

by J. HERBERT KANE.

(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976. Pp. 328, \$9.95.)

Abstract of a review by DAVID M. HOWARD, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October 1977 (Vol. 13, No. 4).

DR. KANE of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School writes with his usual clarity and comprehensiveness. The book has theological and Biblical depth but is written in lucid language and logical sequence. While it may prove a bit too comprehensive for the beginner in missions, this will be a valuable textbook for seminaries, Bible institutes, and Christian colleges for courses in missions. It is detailed enough to provide extensive study in the areas it covers, yet because of its organisation it can be handled easily in Church or school situations. This book will be a good foundation for understanding what the Bible says about our responsibility to the world.

### **The Early Church and Africa**

by JOHN P. KEALY and DAVID W. SHENK.

(Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1975. Pp. 345, £7.50.) p. 319

Abstract of a review by PER HASSING, *Missiology*, July 1977 (Vol. V, No. 3).

THIS book should effectively help in exploding two solidly held myths, that Christianity is a European religion and that all Arabs are Muslims. It shows that the Coptic Church with its probable origins in the Apostolic age survived through its missionary activities in Nubia, Ethiopia and India, and outlines the dangers of excessive nationalism in North Africa and of allowing the world to write the Church's agenda. The book offers interesting biographies of such men as Origen, Tertullian and Augustine (whose handling of the Donatist Controversy was disastrous for the Church), and speaks movingly of the martyr Church of North Africa. Theological and philosophic trends are covered with model descriptions of the Gnostic and Christological controversies. The book is written as a textbook for the 'School Certificate Course, based on the East African Syllabus for Christian Religious Education'. p. 320

# Journal Survey

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## Journal Information

### *Publications Referred to in this Issue*

#### **1. Calvin Theological Journal**

One year \$6, two years \$10, three years \$14, from Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, USA.

#### **2. Christianity Today**

*Published fortnightly*—\$15 (add 60c postage in USA, \$2 overseas), from Box 3800, Greenwich, Connecticut 06830, USA. Australian agents: S. John Bacon Pub. Co., 12–13 Windsor Ave., Mt. Waverley, Vic. 3149.

#### **3. Churchman**

£5 or \$8.50 (£4 in UK and special rate for theological students), single issues £0.95 from Church Book Room Press, 7 Wine Office Court, London EC4A 3DA, UK.



#### **4. Eternity**

*Published monthly*—in USA one year \$9, two years \$15, three years \$20 (elsewhere \$1 extra per annum), single issues \$1 each, from Eternity, 1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, Penn. 19103, USA.

#### **5. Evangelical Missions Quarterly**

\$7 (bulk rates on request), single issues \$1.75, from Evangelical Missions Publishers, Box 794, Wheaton, Illinois, 60187, USA.

#### **6. Evangelical Quarterly**

£3.40 or \$9, from Paternoster Press Ltd., 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW, UK, or Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Avenue, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502, USA. [p. 324](#)

#### **7. Extension Seminary**

Contribution welcomed (\$5 every 2–3 years to cover costs) towards subscriptions from Extension Seminary Quarterly Bulletin, Apdo 3, San Felipe Reu., Guatemala, Central America.

#### **8. International Review of Mission**

\$9, £3.80 or Sfr., 27.50, single issues \$2.80, £1.20 or Sfr. 8.50, from WCC, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, or WCC Office, Room 440, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10027, USA, or British Council of Churches, 10 Eaton Gate, Sloane Square, London SW1, UK.

#### **9. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society**

\$8.50, single issues \$2.25, from Mr. S. J. Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson, Mississippi 39209, USA.

#### **10. Ministerial Formation**

Contributions of \$5 per subscription, or exchange of publications, welcomed. Programme on Theological Education, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

#### **11. Missiology**

\$10, single issues \$3.50 (\$3 if payment accompanies order), from *Missiology*, 1605 East Elizabeth Street, Pasadena, California 91030, USA. \$14.50 annual membership in the American Society of Missiology includes subscription to this Journal.

#### **12. Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research**

Subscriptions on a calendar year basis only—\$6 (\$3 for new subscriptions, also bulk rates on request), single issues \$3, from Publications Office, Overseas Ministries Study Center, PO Box 2057, Ventnor, New Jersey 08406, USA.

#### **13. Reformed Theological Review**

Published *three* times a year—\$ 3.90 Post free from [p. 325](#) *Reformed Theological Review*, Box 2587W Elizabeth Street P.O., Melbourne Vic. 3001, Australia.

#### **14. Tenth**

\$5 from Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 17th and Spruce Sts., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103, USA.

#### **15. Themelios**

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**16. Theologische Beiträge**

DM 24, single issues DM 4.50, from Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, Postfach 11 01 97, 5600 Wuppertal 11, West Germany.

**17. Theological Forum of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod**

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